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Amir congratulates president of Chad

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Abdullah bin Hamad al-Thani sent cables of congratulations to Chad's President Lt Gen Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno on the anniversary of his country's Independence Day. HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani also sent a similar cable of congratulations to Prime Minister Allamaye Halina. (QNA)

PM, Dutch premier discuss Gaza issue

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani received yesterday a phone call from Prime Minister of the Netherlands Dick Schoof. Discussion during the call, focused on co-operation between the two countries, developments in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories, and ways to advance international efforts to resolve the Palestinian issue through peaceful means and implement the two-state solution. (QNA)

Macron slams Israel's Gaza takeover plan

French President Emmanuel Macron condemned yesterday Israel's announced plan to capture the city of Gaza as a disaster and a headlong rush into permanent war. Macron reiterated his proposal to establish a stabilisation mission under a UN mandate to secure the Gaza Strip. Italy's Minister of Defence, Guido Crosetto, has affirmed that what's happening in Gaza is not a military operation with collateral damage, but rather a pure denial of the law and the founding values of civilisation. (QNA)

Trump orders takeover of Washington's police

US President Donald Trump said yesterday he was deploying 800 National Guard troops to Washington and temporarily taking over the city's police department, an extraordinary assertion of presidential power in the nation's capital. Trump's move, which bypassed the city's elected leaders, was emblematic of his second-term approach. Page 6

PM bids farewell to UAE ambassador



HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani met yesterday with UAE ambassador to Qatar, Sheikh Zayed bin Khalifa bin Sultan bin Shakhboot al-Nahyan, on the occasion of the end of his tenure in the country. HE Sheikh Mohammed wished the ambassador success in his future assignments and expressed hopes for further progress and prosperity in relations between the two countries. (QNA)

Qatar hails declarations by Australia, NZ on recognising Palestine

Qatar has welcomed the declaration of Australia on the intent to recognise the State of Palestine, along with the New Zealand declaration that it is mulling the recognition of the State of Palestine. Qatar termed these two announcements as positive steps that align with international legitimacy and the relevant UN Security Council resolutions, as well as vital support for the legitimate rights of the brotherly Palestinian people to have self-determination and establish their independent state on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital. A statement by the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs yesterday affirmed that these decisions are consistent with the consensus reached among the countries participating in the international conference for the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine and the implementation of the two-state solution, based on a roadmap to increase the recognitions of the Palestinian State. The ministry reiterated Qatar's call upon all nations that have yet to recognise the State of Palestine to take similar steps that reflect commitment to international law and back the historic and enduring rights of the Palestinian people on their territories. (QNA)

13 Palestinians killed in Israeli shelling

Thirteen Palestinians were martyred and others injured yesterday evening in Israeli shelling of the Gaza Strip. Local sources said that the occupation forces targeted those waiting for humanitarian aid in the Al Sudaniya area, northwest of the Gaza Strip, killing eight of them and wounding others. The sources added that five other people were martyred when the occupation forces targeted a group of people in the Hakr al-Jami area in the city of Deir Al-Balah,

central Gaza Strip. The Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) reported that the Al Saraya Field Hospital received about 30 wounded aid-seekers in the northern Gaza Strip. Palestinian medical sources announced earlier yesterday that the death toll in the ongoing Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip had risen to 61,499, the majority of whom were children and women, in addition to the injury of 153,575, since the start of the aggression on Oct 7, 2023. (QNA)

Amir, Azerbaijan president discuss bilateral relations



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani and Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev discussed bilateral relations and means to further develop and enhance them to serve common interests. This came during a phone call His Highness the Amir received yesterday from the President of Azerbaijan. During the call, they also exchanged views on the most prominent regional and international developments of mutual interest. (QNA)

World slams Israel's killing of Al Jazeera journalists

AFP
Gaza City/Jerusalem

Condemnations poured in from the UN and media rights groups yesterday after an Israeli strike killed an Al Jazeera news team in Gaza, as Palestinians mourned the journalists.

Dozens of Gazans stood amid bombed-out buildings in the courtyard of Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City to pay their respects to Anas al-Sharif, a prominent Al Jazeera correspondent aged 28, and four of his colleagues killed on Sunday.

Hospital director Mohammed Abu Salmiya said a sixth journalist, freelance reporter Mohammed al-Khaldi, was killed in the strike that targeted the Al Jazeera team.

Al Jazeera said four other employees — correspondent Mohammed Qreiqeh, and cameramen Ibrahim Zaher, Mohammed Noufal and Moamen Aliwa — were killed when the strike hit a tent set up for journalists outside the main gate of Al-Shifa.

According to local journalists, Sharif had worked at the start of his career with a Hamas communication office, where his role was to publicise events organised by the group that has ruled the Gaza Strip since 2006.



Anas al-Sharif

Sharif was one of the Al Jazeera's most recognisable faces working on the ground in Gaza, providing daily reports on the now 22-month-old war.

Media freedom groups have condemned the Israeli strike on journalists, which the UN human rights agency called a "grave breach of international humanitarian law".

A posthumous message, written by Sharif in April in case of his death, was published online saying he had been silenced and urging people "not to forget Gaza".

In July, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) called for his protection following online posts by an Israeli military spokesman.

The group had accused Israel of a "pattern" of labelling journalists militants "without providing credible evidence", and said the military had levelled similar accusations against media workers in Gaza including Al Jazeera staff.

"International law is clear that active combatants are the only justified targets in a war setting," Jodie Ginsberg, CPJ's chief executive, told AFP yesterday.

Unless Israel "can demonstrate that Anas al-Sharif was still an active combatant, then there is no justification for his killing", she said. To Page 5

PM condemns killing of journalists

HE the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohamed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim al-Thani has condemned the killing of five Al Jazeera journalists by Israel in Gaza yesterday. In a post on his official X account, he said: "The deliberate targeting of journalists by Israel in the Gaza Strip reveals how these crimes are beyond imagination, amid the inability of the international community & its laws to stop this tragedy. May God have mercy on journalists Anas al-Sharif, Mohammed Qraieqa, & their colleagues."

Qatar sees over 2.6mn visitors in first half of 2025

Qatar has welcomed more than 2.6mn international visitors between January and June of 2025, representing an increase of 3% compared to the same period last year, Qatar Tourism has announced.

Visitors from Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries accounted for 36% of arrivals, followed by visitors from Europe at 26%, Asia and Oceania at 22%, and 7% each from the Americas and other Arab countries.

These figures underscore Qatar's standing as a preferred destination in both regional and international markets, a statement said yesterday.

Qatar saw visitors arrive by air (57%), by land (33%), and by sea (9%), reflecting the success of the country's multi-access strategy that ensures ease and smooth entry for visitors from around the world.

This growth coincided with solid performance in the hospitality sector, with hotels recording an average occupancy rate of 71%, an increase of 2% points com-

pared to the same period in 2024. A total of 5.23mn hotel nights were sold, marking a 7% rise from the first half of last year.

HE Saad bin Ali al-Kharji, chairman of Qatar Tourism and chair of the Board of Directors of Visit Qatar, said: "The figures for the first half of 2025 confirm the success of our comprehensive strategy to strengthen Qatar's position on the global tourism map and to develop the tourism sector as a key pillar in diversifying the national economy, in line with the goals of Qatar National Vision 2030. As part of our efforts, we will continue to deepen co-operation at local, regional and international levels, expand strategic partnerships, and participate in major global forums. We are confident that the second half of the year will deliver further achievements and wider successes, driven by an ambitious vision and integrated plans that ensure the tourism sector as a whole provides experiences that meet the expectations of residents, visitors and stakeholders."



Earlier this year, Qatar Tourism announced that the tourism sector as a whole contributed QR55bn to the country's GDP in 2024, accounting for an estimated 8% of the total economy, a 14% increase compared to 2023. This demonstrates clear progress towards the Tourism Strategy 2030 target of raising the sector's contribution to 10-12% of GDP.

In the first half of the year, Visit Qatar launched several regional and global media campaigns to attract visitors from key target markets. This included the recent "Moments Made for You" campaign, which highlights the range of experiences available during the summer season and invites visitors from GCC countries and beyond to discover Qatar. Visit Qatar also released a promotional film featuring English footballer David Beckham, showcasing the country's diverse tourism offerings, from heritage and culture to modern attractions and natural sites. Additionally, Visit Qatar expanded its stopover promotion campaigns, focusing on priority mar-

kets including the United Kingdom, United States of America, South Africa, China and Australia.

These campaigns coincided with major events such as the Qatar Toy Festival, which recently completed its third edition, attracting over 130,000 visitors, a 12% increase from the previous year. Other notable events included the Doha Jewellery and Watches Exhibition 2025, Ras Abrouq, Sealine Season, Shop Qatar, and Qatar International Food Festival, alongside key initiatives such as Scoop on the Sea and the ongoing whale shark tours.

Abdulaziz Ali al-Mawlawi, chief executive officer of Visit Qatar, said: "Our success in the first half of 2025 demonstrates sustained momentum and growing confidence from regional and global markets in Qatar's tourism offerings. We have attracted more visitors through a distinctive combination of major events, international campaigns, and innovative tourism products that cater to a wide range of interests."

MoI hosts forum on integration of security, organisational roles of Qatar Football League

The Establishments and Authorities Security Department at the Ministry of Interior (MoI) organised yesterday a forum on the integration of security and organisational roles of the Qatar Football League.

The forum was attended by a number of specialists in the fields of sports security and organisation, as well as representatives from the Qatar Stars League, clubs, and partner entities.

Major Saeed Jumaa al-Hitmi, Acting Head of the Sports Security Section, said in a speech on the occasion that the forum stems from the recognition of the importance of enhancing joint work and integrated co-ordination between security and organisational bodies, ensuring the success of sporting events and providing a safe environment that meets the aspirations of fans and supports the goals of sports institutions in the country.

He said that previous experiences have proven that success is not achieved through planning alone, but rather through actual integration between security personnel, organising committees, and relevant authorities. He noted that the forum features an open dialogue session to ex-



change experiences and review best practices.

For his part, Hassan Rabia al-Kuwari, Executive Director of Sales, Marketing, and Communications at the Qatar Stars League, emphasised that the forum reflects the spirit of co-operation between the organisation, the Sports Security Department, the clubs, and partners. He praised the remarkable development in co-ordination mechanisms over recent seasons.

He expressed his hope that

these meetings would continue, as they provide an opportunity to discuss challenges, solutions, and innovative ideas, enhancing the level of organization and the image of the Qatari league regionally and internationally.

The forum program included a visual presentation of the most prominent events of the 2024-2025 football season, followed by two dialogue sessions to discuss best practices and challenges. The final recommendations were then presented and the participants were honoured. (QNA)

QSCCB marks Youth Day with session on visual impairment

The Qatar Social and Cultural Center for Blind (QSCCB) has organised an interactive awareness session to empower youth and raise their awareness about the issues faced by persons with disabilities. This initiative targets members of QSCCB and the Kaaban Youth Center, and it is part of the celebration of the International Youth Day, observed annually on August 12.

The session was presented by QSCCB Member Ahmed al-Kubaisi, who provided an overview of visual impairment, its types, and

major causes, while also correcting common misconceptions about the condition. Al-Kubaisi emphasised that losing vision does not always mean complete blindness, and that visual impairment does not prevent a person from learning or working.

He also showcased key assistive technologies that support people with visual disabilities, such as screen readers, smartphone apps, Braille tools, smart glasses, and modern tech devices – which participants had the opportunity to try. The session also covered

appropriate ways to interact with people with visual impairments, including introducing oneself clearly, using specific descriptions, avoiding unnecessary loud speech, informing the person of obstacles or surroundings, allowing them to hold the guide's arm, and notifying them when leaving – while highlighting behaviours to avoid.

The event reaffirmed the importance of promoting social awareness and the role of youth in supporting the inclusion of visually impaired individuals in all areas of life. (QNA)

QPC denounces targeted killing of five journalists by Israeli forces

The Qatar Press Center (QPC) has condemned in the strongest terms the assassination of Al Jazeera correspondents Anas al-Sharif and Mohammed Qreiqea, as well as the deaths of cameramen Ibrahim Daher, Mohammed Nofal and Moamen Aliwa, as a result of a deliberate Israeli bombardment of their tent in front of Al-Shifa Medical Complex in the Gaza Strip.

The centre affirms that since the beginning of the aggression on Gaza, the spokesperson for the Israeli occupation army, Avi-chay Adraee, and his platforms have continued to wage a systematic incitement campaign against journalist Anas al-Sharif, which has escalated in recent days by accusing him of terrorism.

The Israeli bombing also comes within the framework of a systematic policy pursued by the occupation army since the beginning of its war of extermination against the people of Gaza on Oct 7, 2023, to date. It targets journalists' locations, homes, and tents to prevent them from conveying the truth to the world and to silence their voices forever. The number of journalists martyred to date has reached 237.

A few days ago, the QPC published a statement by Irene Khan, the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression, condemning the cyberattacks launched by the Israeli occupation army to defame our colleague Anas al-Sharif. She emphasised that the smear campaigns are a blatant attempt to endanger his life and silence his reports documenting the genocide of the population of the Gaza Strip.



In a statement published on the UN website, the UN expert expressed her deep concern about the threats and false accusations directed by the Israeli army against Anas al-Sharif, the last surviving Al Jazeera journalist in northern Gaza. She said: "Concerns about the safety of the Al Jazeera correspondent are justified, and there is growing evidence that journalists in Gaza have been targeted for killing and assassination by the Israeli army, based on baseless allegations that they are ' Hamas terrorists'."

The last thing Anas al-Sharif wrote on his social media accounts was: "This is my will and my final message... If these words reach you, know that Israel has succeeded in killing me and silencing my voice." He added: "God knows that I have exerted all my effort and strength to be a support and voice for my people, ever since I

opened my eyes to life in the alleys and neighbourhoods of Jabalia refugee camp. I had hoped that God would prolong my life so that I could return with my family and loved ones to our original hometown of occupied Ashkelon (al-Majdal), but God's will was greater, and His judgment is binding."

He said, "I have lived through the pain in all its details, and I have tasted the pain and loss repeatedly. Despite that, I have never hesitated to convey the truth as it is, without falsification or distortion. May God be a witness against those who remained silent, those who accepted our killing, those who held our breath, and those who failed to stop the massacre our people have been subjected to for more than a year and a half. I entrust Palestine to you, the jewel in the crown of Muslims and the heartbeat of every free person in this world."

Al-Hammadi receives copy of credentials of Belgian diplomat



HE the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr Ahmed bin Hassan al-Hammadi, received yesterday a copy of the credentials of Belgium's ambassador to Qatar, Eugene Crijns. HE Dr al-Hammadi wished the ambassador success in his duties, assuring him of providing full support to advance the bilateral relations to a closer co-operation in various fields. (QNA)

Qatar empowers youth as part of govt policies

Every year on Aug 12, the world observes International Youth Day, an occasion celebrated by the international community to highlight youth issues and promote their active engagement across various fields. According to the UN, the theme of the 2025 day focuses on local youth actions for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and beyond.

This topic sheds light on the role performed by local and regional governments in empowering youth to engage in the decision-making process locally, thereby opening real opportunities for them to actively contribute to the development process. The celebration aims to pitch these available opportunities, and the challenges encountered across the globe, as the UN capitalises on these kinds of events to promote culture and awareness with the objective of raising awareness about youth-associated issues and marshalling efforts to achieve a concrete breakthrough in these fields.

Speaking to Qatar News Agency (QNA), Director of the Youth Affairs Department at the Ministry of Sports and Youth, Fawaz Abdullah al-Misfari, affirmed that youth action matters most in building the Qatari community and fostering its engagement in national development. The ministry believes in the fact that engaging youth in local projects and programmes enhances their spirit to responsibly take on the mantle of leadership, in addition to exploring and advancing their talents, al-Misfari highlighted.

He added that the ministry is always keen to have integrated

and holistic plans and strategies that include all youth from both genders, whether citizens or residents without exception, indicating that people with disabilities have special programmes that offer an environment that incubates innovation and engagement.

The ministry organises professional panel discussions and workshops on AI applications and digital transformation, which provide them with the opportunity to explore the state-of-the-art evolutions in these critical areas, as well as communal volunteering that bolsters the spirit of giving and responsibility, al-Misfari underlined.

These events largely help youth internalise a variety of practical expertise, particularly at youth centres, alongside the "We Are All Responsible" initiative and so forth as part of the Qatar National Vision 2030, which substantially focuses on investing in human capital and building youth capabilities to secure an enduring and bright future, he outlined.

Al-Misfari further stated that there are inspirational models of young people who took on the mantle of volunteering initiatives aimed at addressing environmental issues, such as recycling and natural resources conservation, while others participated in entrepreneurship and contributed to undergirding the national economy with emerging projects.

Youth engagement and decision-making have become a concrete reality through youth centres and commissions, along with their contributions in health and educational awareness-raising campaigns, as well as national identity enhancement

programmes, as many of them unlocked projects that backed education quality, women empowerment, and active engagement in supporting the green economy, al-Misfari pointed out.

In addition, he emphasised that the Qatari youth are key partners in implementing the Qatar National Vision 2030, which largely aligns with the UN SDGs, as demonstrated in national and global initiatives where youth either implement or engage in them.

Notwithstanding these colossal milestones in the youth sector, al-Misfari noted some existential challenges that should be addressed, including upscaling awareness about the significance of engagement in modern development projects and spurring youth to pursue active participation, in addition to keeping up with the rapid technological evolution that requires augmenting advanced technological skills.

Finally, al-Misfari underlined that youth empowerment in Qatar receives utmost priority within government policies, as reflected in appropriating adequate financial support and budgets to advance youth projects and programmes.

Al-Misfari added that the nation works to strengthen youth infrastructure at youth centres and institutions, as well as the provision of support for training and innovation, stating that prioritisation of youth in Qatar is the highest at the regional level.

He asserted that the ministry aspires to further partnerships and resources to ensure the sustainability of youth empowerment and achieving their ambitions. (QNA)

MoCI reopens car company after implementing corrective measures

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI) announced the reopening of Al Jaidah Automotive Company after the company implemented a comprehensive set of corrective measures that met the Ministry's requirements. This followed a temporary administrative closure imposed due to violations related to the unavailability of spare parts and delayed after-sales services.

In a statement, the ministry explained that the company took the initiative to implement a series of corrective measures, which included resolving all complaints related to customer service and spare parts, as well as enhancing its spare parts inventory through urgent orders worth QR1.6mn.

These steps aim to reduce waiting times and improve service quality. The statement added that the company increased the pace of supply from the manufacturer and modified its internal escalation mechanism to ensure that any delay exceed-

The MoCI affirmed that the company's actions reflect its commitment to rectifying its situation and responding to the ministry's directives, contributing to an improved standard of after-sales services and reinforcing consumer confidence in the local market

ing five days is addressed. Additionally, the company has committed to paying the imposed fines, which amounted to QR180,000.

The MoCI affirmed that the company's actions reflect its commitment to rectifying its situation and responding to the ministry's directives, contributing to an improved standard of after-sales services and reinforcing consumer confidence in the local market.

The statement emphasised the ministry's continued oversight and inspection efforts to ensure that all commercial establishments comply with the

provisions of Law No 8 of 2008 on Consumer Protection. It urged all citizens and residents to report any violations or misconduct via the ministry's call centre at 16001 or through its official social media channels.

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry issued Administrative Decision No 18 of 2025 on Aug 3, closing the company for 30 days, after recording 29 repeated violations of the same nature, in addition to a number of complaints submitted by consumers.

These actions constituted a breach of Article 16 of Law No 8 of 2008 and its executive regulations. (QNA)

Safari Hypermarket launches QR1-9 promotion

Safari Hypermarket has launched the QR1-9 Promotion across all its outlets, featuring nearly 5,000 products at massive discounts, until August 16, it was announced yesterday.

"Having already secured a strong position in customers' minds with numerous promo-

tions in Qatar's retail sector, including the popular 10, 20, 30 Promotion, Safari now presents its latest offer," a statement said.

Grilled chicken half is available for QR7.50, Indian buffalo meat (500g) for QR8.75, white eggs (6-piece tray) for QR2, Baryara semolina (400g) for QR1,



various perfumes for QR5, Ariel detergent powder (1kg) for

QR6.75, earphones for QR1, and electric kettles for QR9.

Huge discounts are also available on toys. The offer covers all categories, including bakery, grocery, cosmetics, fruits, vegetables, household items, toys, stationery, IT products, ready-made garments, footwear, and bags. In addition, during this period, customers who make purchases worth QR50 at any

Safari outlet will receive a raffle coupon, giving them the chance to win 25 Toyota Raize cars through the Safari Win 25 Toyota Raize Cars Mega Promotion. The next raffle draw for this mega promotion will be held on August 21 at the Birkat Al Awamer outlet of Safari Hypermarket.

Visit Qatar CEO recognised by Forbes Middle East

Forbes Middle East has recognised Engineer Abdulaziz Ali al-Mawlawi, CEO of Visit Qatar, at number 25 in its 'Top 100 Travel & Tourism Leaders' list for 2025, reflecting his significant role in elevating Qatar's status as a premier global tourism destination.

Appointed as CEO of Visit Qatar in May 2024, al-Mawlawi heads the marketing and promotional arm of Qatar Tourism, the nation's tourism regulatory authority. Under his leadership, Qatar welcomed 5mn international visitors in 2024, marking a record-breaking 25% increase year-on-year.

Forbes credited al-Mawlawi for his strategic vision, which includes positioning Qatar as a key destination for major global sporting events, as well as his emphasis on digital innovation and forging key global partnerships, a Visit Qatar statement said yesterday.

Qatar Airways Group CEO Engineer Badr Mohammed al-Meer, was also honoured in the list, securing third place, the statement added.



Chief Executive Officer of Visit Qatar, Engineer Abdulaziz Ali al-Mawlawi.

Proposals invited to bolster US-Qatar ties

The US embassy in Doha has announced a notice of funding opportunity for proposals that strengthen ties between the US and Qatar.

This funding opportunity seeks to foster collaboration through programmes that highlight shared values and promote bilateral co-operation, a statement said yesterday.

The total funding available under this announcement is \$200,000, with awards ranging from \$10,000-100,000. All awards are subject to the availability of funds.

The deadline for applications is Aug 30 and an online information session on the application process will be available on Aug 21. More details, are available on the US Embassy website.

Strategic themes and priorities for this opportunity are listed below. America 250: Programmes that celebrate the upcoming 250th anniversary of the US by emphasising historical and cultural connections between the US and Qatar. Activities may include educational initiatives, cultural exchanges, and events that highlight shared values and American excellence.

Entrepreneurship: Initiatives that foster entrepreneurial spirit and innovation, including workshops, mentorship programmes, and collaborative projects that support startups and small businesses.

Emerging Technology/Artificial Intelligence (AI): Proposals exploring the role of emerging technologies and AI in addressing common challenges, including technology transfer initiatives and joint ventures.

Youth Leadership: Programmes that empower the next generation through leadership training, exchange programmes,

and civic engagement activities.

Projects must impact or benefit at least one of the priority audiences such as: educational institutions; artists, historians, and cultural experts; Qatari youth (high school and university students); early career-level professionals; entrepreneurs and innovators and teachers and academic professionals.

Organisations eligible to apply include: Not-for-profit and community service organisations registered and operating in Qatar; Individuals (Qatari

citizens and residents of Qatar); Public and non-profit private educational institutions registered in Qatar; Public and non-profit educational institutions registered in the United States working with affiliates in Qatar and Qatari government institutions.

All proposals must be submitted via e-mail to DohaGrants@state.gov

Full application instructions, eligibility criteria, and required forms are available on Grants.gov and MyGrants.

MoI reveals new Metrash updates for vehicle procedures, traffic services

Innovation using digital tech to be discussed at Arab Forum in Cairo

QNA
Cairo

The Third Arab Forum for Digital Transformation in Institutions: Advanced Strategies to Promote Innovation and Achieve Excellence in Citizen Service began in the Egyptian capital, Cairo, yesterday.

The forum is organised by the Arab Administrative Development Organisation (ARADO),

affiliated with the Arab League, in partnership with the Libyan Institute of Management.

The three-day forum will address several topics, including innovation in public service delivery using digital technologies, the role of data and artificial intelligence in improving institutional performance, digital governance: challenges and solutions, the integration of technology and institutional culture, strategies for empowering digital human competencies, and the

role of culture in the institution in identifying opportunities for digital transformation.

In his opening remarks at the forum, Director General of the ARADO Dr Nasser al-Hatlan al-Qahtani said that digital transformation has become an indispensable strategic option for enhancing operational efficiency and competitiveness.

This aims to bring about fundamental change in service delivery mechanisms, particularly in the public sector, to improve

quality of life and effectively meet citizens' needs.

In this regard, the Director General of the organisation underlined the importance of adopting advanced strategies that strike a balance between the use of modern technology and the establishment of an innovative organisational culture based on knowledge and the effective use of data.

He noted that digital transformation includes the re-engineering of organisational pro-

The three-day forum will address several topics, including innovation in public service delivery using digital technologies, the role of data and artificial intelligence in improving institutional performance, digital governance: challenges and solutions, the integration of technology and institutional culture, strategies for empowering digital human competencies, and the role of culture in the institution in identifying opportunities for digital transformation

esses with the aim of improving the beneficiary experience, fos-

tering innovation, and increasing operational efficiency.

City Center Doha hosts 'Summer Fun Fridays'



Fun City, a leading family entertainment centre located on the entertainment level of City Center Doha and a fully-owned subsidiary of Aamal, is hosting a 'Summer Fun Fridays' programme, until the end of August, from 6pm-8pm.

Visitors can enjoy a mix of live performances, characters, and activities designed for people of all ages. Samir Fathy, operation manager of Fun City, said: "At Fun City, we're dedicated to providing a safe, engaging, and fun-filled environment for families. Our 'Summer Fun Fridays' are designed to offer something for everyone, creating lasting memories and spreading joy throughout our community."

"Guests can expect a variety of exciting entertainment each week, including captivating live performances and a rotating cast of mascots who bring fresh energy



and fun with every visit."

He added: "Children will be mesmerised by special bubble creations, and energetic clown shows. Amazing balloon twisting

artists will also be there, transforming ordinary balloons into extraordinary shapes and characters."

In addition to the 'Summer Fun

Fridays' programme, Fun City offers a wide range of thrilling rides, arcade machines, VR games, and expansive play zones for continuous entertainment, a statement added.

'QU admission policy reflects mission to develop national competencies'

Qatar University (QU) Vice-President for Student Affairs Dr Mohammad Diab emphasised QU's pride in its relationship with the community and its deep commitment to its role in developing national talent capable of effectively contributing to the country's development.

In an interview with Qatar News Agency (QNA) on the occasion of approaching fall semester, Dr Diab said that this commitment is reflected in QU's admissions policy, which is based on its mission to build human capital and prepare national talents to support the country's comprehensive development plans, while providing equal, high-quality educational opportunities.

As in all previous semesters, QU successfully accepted all Qatari students who applied for the fall 2025 semester and met the admission requirements. Dr Diab noted that 97% of them were accepted into one of their first three choices, reflecting the university's investment in motivating its students and its efforts to ensure they receive a distinguished education and university experience.

Dr Diab pointed out that the number of Qatari students accepted into QU exceeded 4,000, and that no Qatari student who met the admission requirements had their application rejected. He emphasised the university's commitment to achieving a balance between students' aspirations and higher education trends locally, regionally, and globally, as well as the sustainability of specialisations.

Dr Diab explained that after the university accepted all Qatari students who met the admission requirements for various majors, QU will also allocate the remaining available seats to non-Qataris, including residents and international students, to compete according to the capacity of the colleges and academic programmes.

He affirmed that all Qatari students applying for Fall 2025 admission were accepted based on their initial preference, into the Colleges of Business and Economics, Arts and Sciences, Sharia and Islamic Studies, Sport Sciences, Nursing, and Pharmacy. He noted that the colleges where the number of Qatari students applying exceeded the total number of available seats were accepted based on one of the preferences they specified in their university admission application, in accordance with the principle of competitiveness.

He explained that the principle of competitiveness for academic seats refers to the comparison of students applying to a college or academic programme when the number of applicants exceeds the programme's capacity. Dr Diab added that this is a procedure that universities resort to if the number of students applying for admission exceeds the capacity of the college or academic programme, whereby students are ranked according to their performance in high school, with the student with the highest academic achievement receiving priority for admission to the college or programme of their choice.

The competitive nature of the current cycle had an impact on a small number of Qatari students who expressed a desire to enrol in programmes where the numbers exceeded the capacity of these programmes, such as medicine and law. Students who achieved the highest grades in high school were accepted, and the remaining students were then accepted based on their preferences that they had chosen when applying to join the university.

As for non-Qatari students, Dr Diab stated that it is often difficult to accept non-Qatari students at the university due to limited capacity. These students can try again by reapplying and compet-



Qatar University (QU) Vice-President for Student Affairs Dr Mohammad Diab.

ing for admission in the following semesters. He pointed out that the principle of competition is applied in two stages. In the first stage, applications for admission from Qatari students are considered. After their admission and placement in the various programmes is completed, applications from non-Qatari students competing for the remaining available seats in colleges and academic programmes are considered.

Conditional admission

Dr Diab explained the concept of conditional admission granted to some students, clarifying that it is a preliminary and temporary acceptance, contingent on the student fulfilling a specific requirement set by the university within a defined timeframe. If the student meets the condition within the specified period, the admission is automatically converted into an unconditional final acceptance,

he said, adding that these conditions typically involve submitting official documents or achieving certain scores or levels in standardised tests.

He pointed out that most current cases of conditional admission are related to students who obtained their high school certificates from schools that follow international curricula, such as the International Baccalaureate (IB) or the British system, where final results are usually released after the university's academic term begins.

To avoid delaying the admission process for this category of students, the university evaluates their applications based on predicted grades issued by their schools, and makes admission decisions assuming their final results will not fall below these predicted grades, he said.

These students are granted conditional admission, with the understanding that they must submit

their final results as soon as they are issued, and that these results must not be lower than the grades upon which their admission was based. If the condition is met, the admission becomes final and unconditional. However, if the results are lower than expected, or are not submitted on time, the university will re-evaluate the student's admission, he explained.

Regarding students' interest in academic majors and how the university balances that with the country's needs, Dr Diab noted that interest in academic programmes varies annually. However, the university strives to balance students' preferences and aspirations with labour market demands, ensuring the sustainability of academic programmes and providing the market with the necessary qualified professionals. He affirmed that the university actively encourages Qatari students to pursue academic majors aligned with national priorities, such as medicine, engineering, education, and nursing. This encouragement is offered through scholarships, sponsorship programmes, school awareness campaigns, and early career guidance.

He noted that the total number of enrolled students at Qatar University for Fall 2025 has reached about 30,000 students, spread across various colleges and academic programmes, with Qataris making up around 70% of the student body.

Comprehensive plan

Speaking about preparations for the Fall 2025 semester, Dr Diab said that, in line with the university's strategy to provide a leading and stimulating learning environment, a comprehensive plan has been developed to ensure readiness for the new academic term. The plan includes maintaining and preparing classrooms and laboratories to ensure

infrastructure readiness; upgrading electronic systems to facilitate student registration and access to university services; and launching a new interactive digital platform for incoming students, featuring smart campus maps, a comprehensive digital guide, and a live chat system with academic advisers.

Additionally, the plan will involve training faculty members on the latest teaching and assessment methods to stay aligned with academic developments, and enhancing student services, including academic advising, psychological and social support, improved food outlets, and organised traffic flow on campus.

Dr Diab emphasised that the university has worked to integrate technology solutions, improve services, and provide an advanced educational environment for both new and continuing students, all aimed at enhancing the student experience from day one. Dr Diab concluded his interview with QNA by stressing that Qatar University has always been and continues to be the academic cornerstone of the community, moving steadily toward academic excellence and alignment with national development goals, while maintaining the highest academic standards, both locally and globally, in line with its responsibility to the nation and society.

He called on both new and current students to seize the opportunity to build their academic and professional futures, noting that the university offers a stimulating environment full of opportunities that supports their ambitions, develops their skills, and prepares them to become active contributors to society and builders of Qatar's future. He reaffirmed the university's commitment to accompany students on their educational journey step by step toward excellence. (QNA)



Qatar Charity opens new school in northern Ghana

Qatar Charity has inaugurated the new "Khalifa School" in the city of Tamale, northern Ghana, aiming to ease the hardships of hundreds of students in a region facing severe poverty and a lack of educational and healthcare infrastructure.

The project is part of Qatar Charity's ongoing humanitarian efforts to support educational infrastructure and empower students and teachers worldwide. Khalifa School comprises three classrooms, an administrative office, a dining room, a library, and sanitation facilities. It accommodates about 150 students and was built to engineering standards designed to ensure its sustainability for decades to come.

In rural Ghana and some impoverished urban areas, students face significant challenges accessing classroom seats due to overcrowding, with class sizes often exceeding normal limits. This has forced some students to drop out due to the lack of seating. School principal Ibrahim Yakubu stressed that Tamale urgently needs more classrooms to accommodate new students and reintegrate dropouts, whose numbers are rising daily. He

noted that severe overcrowding negatively impacts the quality of education and increases dropout risks.



noted that severe overcrowding negatively impacts the quality of education and increases dropout risks.


Idris Rahima, a member of the Parents and Teachers' Committee, expressed his happiness at the school's opening. He said overcrowded classrooms in the area sometimes hold up to 90 students, forcing teachers to seat some children on the floor. "The new Khalifa School has given us renewed hope for quality and dignified education," he said.

Qatar Charity's intervention in Ghana's education sector through the construction of Khalifa School is part of a broader series of educational projects supported by generous donors in Qatar. (QNA)

Ashghal roadmap

The Public Works Authority (Ashghal) is all set to implement several road projects across Qatar in the fourth quarter (Q4) of this year. They are aimed at improving the road networks and repairing, restoring and resurfacing different roads in multiple locations. The project to enhance the infrastructure and road network at Al Masrouhiya Al Daayen serving existing and future residential and commercial plots is to be implemented by Ashghal's Roads Projects Department. The others include roads and infrastructure projects in Rawdat Al Hamama, Salliya Al Attiyah, South Wadi Lusail Natural Reserve, North of Smeisma - Packages O3 and O4. Ashghal recently announced the launch of a five-year plan worth more than QR81bn to implement vital projects across various infrastructure sectors, ranging from the development of citizens' lands, government building projects, sewage networks to strategic outfalls. This strategic step outlines the features of Qatar's infrastructure over the next five years.

A wide range of development projects will be implemented as part of the five-year plan 2025-2029, the biggest in Ashghal's history in terms of the volume of investments and the number of projects. These include the development of citizens' lands through the implementation of an integrated infrastructure that takes into account the concepts of 'humanisation of cities' and focuses on improving the quality of life, in addition to constructing government buildings that serve vital sectors such as health, education, sports and culture.



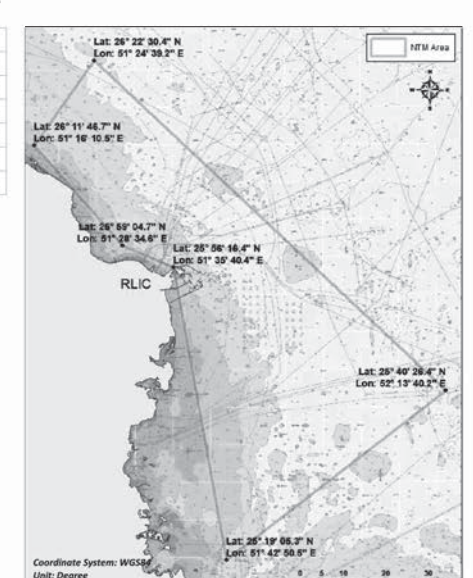
Public Announcement
To all Ships, Fishermen and Mariners
Seismic Survey Acquisition by Vessels AOS Glory, Stanford Hawk, GMS Apollo, Voyager Explorer, BGP Innovator and Safa Searcher
Seismic Survey Works Offshore Qatar from 27th November 2024 – 27th November 2025

Pursuant to and under directives from the Department of Seafarers Affairs & Registration, Ministry of Transport, State of Qatar, this announcement is to inform all Vessels, Mariners and Fishermen that QatarEnergy LNG intends to perform Ocean Bottom Node Seismic Survey Works with Vessels AOS Glory, Stanford Hawk, GMS Apollo, Voyager Explorer, BGP Innovator and Safa Searcher in the locations bound by the coordinates shown in the diagram below.


All Vessels, Mariners and Fishermen are expected to keep clear of the survey locations during the operations.

QatarEnergy LNG takes no responsibility for any loss or damage caused to outside parties in association with this operation, following publication of this notice.

Point	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE
1	26° 22' 30.4"N	51° 24' 39.2"E
2	25° 40' 26.4"N	52° 13' 40.2"E
3	25° 19' 05.3"N	51° 42' 50.5"E
4	25° 56' 16.4"N	51° 35' 40.4"E
5	25° 59' 04.7"N	51° 28' 34.6"E
6	26° 11' 46.7"N	51° 16' 10.5"E



Any further inquiries should be addressed to: Tel. +974 44531797



Dolphin Energy Limited

Invitation to Tender

Tender Number	Description	Tender Bond	Deadline for Tender Submission, 12 Noon (Qatar Time) on
ITT-QC-OPU-1862	Call-Off Agreement for Excavations, Cleaning of Sumps/Pits & Civil Works Repairs	QAR 70,000	10 th September 2025
RFP1200000160	Supply of Methanol on a Call-Off basis for One Year	QAR 5,000	10 th September 2025
ITT-QC-HRU-1857	Landscaping and Gardening Services at Doha and Ras Laffan	QAR 100,000	10 th September 2025

Dolphin Energy Limited (Qatar) is inviting companies to participate in the above Tender.

Only companies registered in the State of Qatar with proven experience, technical knowledge, as well as a demonstrated track record in the supply of the services required should apply.

Expression of Interest (EOI) Form and Scope of Services/Works can be downloaded from the company's website
www.dolphinenergy.com/procurement

How to Tender
Interested companies must complete the EOI Form and submit to company's email address within two (2) working days from the publication date of this advertisement.
Following receipt of completed EOI Form, interested companies will receive a Request for Proposal (RFP) through Dolphin's SAP Arriba to tender.

Gazans mourn Al Jazeera staff killed by Israel

AFP
Gaza City

Gazans gathered yesterday for the funeral of five Al Jazeera staff members and a sixth reporter killed in an Israeli strike, with Israel calling one of them a "fighter" affiliated with Hamas.

Dozens stood amid bombed-out buildings in the courtyard of Al-Shifa hospital to pay their respects to Anas al-Sharif, a prominent Al Jazeera correspondent aged 28, and four of his colleagues, killed on Sunday.

A sixth journalist, Mohammed al-Khaldi who worked as a freelance reporter, was also killed in the strike that targeted the Al Jazeera team, according to the director of Al-Shifa Hospital, Dr Mohammed Abu Salmiya.

Their bodies, wrapped in white shrouds with their faces exposed, were carried through narrow alleys to their graves by mourners including men wearing blue journalists' flak jackets.

Israel confirmed it had targeted Sharif, whom it labelled a "fighter" affiliated with Hamas, saying he "posed as a journalist".

Al Jazeera said its employees were hit in a tent set up for jour-



Mourners march with the bodies of the Al Jazeera journalists who were killed in an overnight Israeli strike on their tent in Gaza City, from Al-Shifa hospital to their burial at the Sheikh Radwan cemetery in Gaza City, yesterday.

nalists outside the main gate of a hospital in Gaza City.

The four other staff members killed were Mohammed Qreiqeh, also a correspondent, and cameraman Ibrahim Zaher, Mohammed Noufal and Moamen Aliwa.

"Anas al-Sharif served as the head of a fighter cell in the Hamas organisation and was responsible for advancing rocket attacks against Israeli civilians and IDF (Israeli) troops," the military said in a statement.

It published a graphic showing

what it said was a list of Hamas operatives in northern Gaza, including Sharif's name, as well as an image of him emblazoned with the word: "Eliminated".

It also published a list it said showed Sharif had been paid \$200 by Hamas after an injury, as well as a list it said was a Hamas battalion's phone directory that included Sharif's number.

Sharif was one of the channel's most recognisable faces working on the ground in Gaza, providing daily reports on the now

22-month-old war.

A posthumous message, written in April in case of his death, was published on his account yesterday morning saying he had been silenced and urging people "not to forget Gaza".

According to local journalists who knew him, Sharif had worked at the start of his career with a Hamas communication office, where his role was to publicise events organised by the group that has exercised total control over Gaza since 2006.

Australia to recognise Palestinian state at UN in September

Reuters
Sydney

Australia will recognise a Palestinian state at next month's United Nations General Assembly, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said yesterday, a move that adds to international pressure on Israel after similar announcements from France, Britain and Canada.

"Australia will recognise the State of Palestine at the 80th Sessions of the United Nations General Assembly in September, to contribute to international momentum towards a two-state solution, a ceasefire in Gaza and the release of hostages," Albanese said in a statement.

Albanese told reporters in Canberra that recognition would be predicated on commitments Australia received from the Palestinian Authority, including that Hamas group would have no involvement in any future state.

"A two-state solution is humanity's best hope to break the cycle of violence in the Middle East and to bring an end to the

conflict, suffering and starvation in Gaza," Albanese said at a press conference. Albanese said he spoke with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday and told him a political solution was needed and not a military one.

Australia last week criticised Israel's plan to take military control of Gaza, and Albanese said the decision to recognise a Palestinian state was "further compelled" by Netanyahu's disregard of the international community's calls and failure to comply with legal and ethical obligations in Gaza.

"The Netanyahu Government is extinguishing the prospect of a two-state solution by rapidly expanding illegal settlements, threatening annexation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and explicitly opposing any Palestinian state," Albanese said in the joint statement with Foreign Minister Penny Wong.

New Zealand said it would consider its position on recognition of a Palestinian state this month. Israel launched its assault on Gaza after Hamas-led fighters stormed Israeli towns near the border in October 2023.

Iran security chief meets officials in Iraq before Lebanon visit

Ali Larjani, the head of Iran's top security body, met with senior officials in Iraq yesterday, ahead of a visit to Lebanon, where the government plans to disarm Hezbollah group, AFP reported from Tehran. Tehran has suffered a series of blows in its long-running rivalry with Israel, including during 12 days of open war between the two countries in June.

Israel, briefly joined by the United States, struck Iranian nuclear facilities, while Israel has also devastated Hamas and Hezbollah since late 2023 - both part of Tehran's anti-Israel "axis of resistance". Iranian state television said Larjani, the head of the National Security Council, had departed on a three-day trip, his first since being appointed. The visit to Baghdad comes amid deep divisions in Iraq over a proposed law that would further formalise the role and, possibly, the autonomy of a powerful coalition of former paramilitaries. Iranian state television said Larjani signed a "joint security memorandum of understanding" with Iraq's National Security Adviser Qassem al-Araji.

World condemns Israel's killing of Al Jazeera journalists in Gaza

From Page 1

Al Jazeera called the attack "a desperate attempt to silence voices exposing the Israeli occupation", as it described Sharif as "one of Gaza's bravest journalists".

The Qatari broadcaster also said the strike followed "repeated incitement" and calls by Israeli officials to target Sharif and his colleagues.

Reporters Without Borders says nearly 200 journalists have been killed in the war on Gaza.

Israel prevents international reporters from entering Gaza, except on occasional tightly controlled trips with the military.

The strike on the news team in Gaza City came days after the Israeli security cabinet had approved plans to send troops into the area, a decision met with mounting domestic and international criticism.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condemned the killing of Al Jazeera journalists, his spokesperson said yesterday.

"The secretary-general calls for an independent and impartial investigation into these latest killings," said UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric.

The European Union condemned the killing of five Al Jazeera journalists, the bloc's foreign

policy chief Kaja Kallas said yesterday.

"The EU condemns the killing of five Al Jazeera journalists in an (Israeli military) air strike outside Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City, including the Al Jazeera correspondent Anas al-Sharif," she said after EU foreign ministers discussed the war in virtual talks.

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer is "gravely concerned" about the repeated targeting of journalists in Gaza, his spokesperson said yesterday.

Israel's offensive has killed at least 61,499 Palestinians, according to the health ministry in Hamas-run Gaza, figures the UN says are reliable.

Somalia executes two soldiers convicted of helping militants

Two Somali soldiers sentenced to death for conspiring with extremist group Al-Shabaab to assassinate a commander were executed yesterday, military court officials said, AFP reported from Mogadishu. The impoverished Horn of Africa nation is witnessing a rise in attacks by the Al Qaeda-linked militia, fuelling concerns of a militant resurgence. The group has seized dozens of towns and villages in an offensive that has reversed nearly all of the gains the army made in 2022 and 2023. A military court in the capital Mogadishu sentenced the two soldiers to death in August, after they were convicted of killing their battalion commander in July. One was found to have received the explosive device, while the second placed it under the bed of their commander, before it was detonated remotely. "They were executed today for their involvement in the assassination of Commander Aided Mohamed Ali," prosecutor Hassan Siyad Mohamed said.

Nigerian military kills more than 100 'bandits' in northwest raid

AFP
Kano

The Nigerian military killed more than 100 members of a criminal gang in an air and ground raid over the weekend, according to a conflict monitoring report produced for the United Nations and seen by AFP yesterday.

Armed groups called "bandits" by locals have for years been terrorising communities in northwest and central Nigeria, raiding villages, kidnapping residents for ransom and burning homes after looting them.

The military raid in the restive northwestern state of Zamfara was launched "in the early hours" Sunday in the Bukkuyum local government area, where fighter jets in co-ordination with ground

troops pounded a gathering of more than 400 bandits in their Makakkari forest camp.

The military's attack "may have occurred in response to consecutive banditry, especially kidnapping, in the state in the previous month", the report said, noting a link between a recent decrease in military operations in the state and a spate of bandit attacks.

Bukkuyum's Adabka village was on Friday the scene of a bandit attack that saw residents kidnapped and 13 security personnel killed.

Bandits had been planning an attack on a farming village when "air and ground troops ambushed a bandit camp... killing over 100", the report said.

A spokesman for the Nigerian army did not respond to an AFP request for comment.

Sudan paramilitaries attack Darfur camp, killing over 40

AFP
Khartoum

Sudan's paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) attacked a famine-hit refugee camp in Darfur yesterday, killing at least 40 civilians, first responders said, as fighting in the western region rages on.

The RSF stormed Abu Shouk camp, opening fire inside homes and on the streets, said the local Emergency Response Room - one of hundreds of volunteer networks providing frontline aid since war erupted between the army and the RSF in April 2023.

It said more than 40 civilians were killed and at least 19 others wounded in the attack.

The rescue group said civilians were "killed either by stray bul-



Sudanese volunteers prepare free meals for some of residents of Al Fasher, a city besieged by Sudan's paramilitary Rapid Support Forces for more than a year, in Darfur region, yesterday.

lets or direct executions" at the camp, located on the northern outskirts of El-Fasher - the last major city in Darfur still held by the Sudanese army.

The RSF has laid a siege on El-Fasher since May 2024.

The local resistance commit-

tee, a pro-democracy volunteer group, confirmed the toll of at least 40 killed in yesterday's attack.

The group condemned what it called "horrific violations being committed against innocent, unarmed people".

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Indian Tandoor Cook - Comi I : 1 No	Qr. 1,600 to 1,800
Indian Kerala - Paratha Maker Comi I : 1 No	Qr. 1,500 To 1,800
Indian Cake & Pastry Maker - Comi I : 2 Nos	Qr. 1,600 to 1,800
Indian Cake & Pastry Maker - CDP : 1 No	Qr. 1,800 to 2,200
Indian Chef for Bakery : 1 No	Qr. 3,500 to 4,000
Indian Bakery Incharge : 1 No	Qr. 2,300 to 2,800
Electrician - 10 Nos	Qr. 1,300 to 1,500
Plumbers - 10 nos	Qr. 1,300 to 1,500
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AOL to shut down dial-up Internet next month

The ear-piercing beeps, squeals and buzzes of 90s-era dial-up Internet will vanish from thousands of hold-over American homes in September as historic provider AOL shuts down the service. The raucous sounds of modems establishing their connection to distant servers marked a generation of Internet users and still pop up in memes to this day.

It also made AOL one of the biggest tech firms of the era, but in the following decades the dial-up connections were steadily

replaced with much faster ADSL and then fibre-optic lines.

"AOL routinely evaluates its products and services and has decided to discontinue dial-up Internet," the pioneering Internet service provider (ISP) said in a blog post.

AOL did not say how many users would be affected by the September 30 shutoff.

CNBC reported that numbers using dial-up had fallen from around 2.1mn in 2015 to just a few thousand in 2021.

AOL merged with Time Warner in a 2001 mega-deal worth \$162bn at the peak of the dotcom bubble.

After splitting off again, it was sold to Verizon in 2015 for a far humbler \$4.4bn.

AOL was merged with another early Internet heavyweight, Yahoo, and sold to the investment fund Apollo Global Management for \$5bn in 2021.

Its once widely used chat program AIM, launched in 1997 and beloved of early-2000s teens, was shut down in 2017. - AFP

Dozens injured in steel plant blast

An explosion at a steel plant in the US state of Pennsylvania has left dozens wounded and others missing, officials said yesterday.

US Senator John Fetterman identified the site as Clairton Coke Works, which is located about 15 miles (25km) outside the city of Pittsburgh.

"My team and I are tracking this explosion and waiting for more information. There is an active search and rescue underway, dozens injured, and per police there's at least one unaccounted for," Fetterman wrote in posts on X.

Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro meanwhile posted on X that his administration was in touch with local officials in Clairton as they responded to the explosion.

"The scene is still active, and folks nearby should follow the direction of local authorities," he wrote, asking readers to join him in prayer for the Clairton community. - AFP/Reuters

Trump deploys National Guard in 'crackdown' on Washington crime

AFP/Reuters
Washington

Donald Trump has deployed military and federal law enforcement to curb violent crime in Washington, as he seeks to make good on his campaign pledge to be a "law and order" president.

The Republican leader said he would place the city's Metropolitan Police under federal government control while also sending the National Guard onto the streets of the US capital.

The overwhelmingly Democratic city faces allegations from Republican politicians that it is overrun by crime, plagued by homelessness and financially mismanaged - although violent offences are down.

"This is Liberation Day in DC, and we're going to take our capital back," Trump said.

Trump - a convicted felon who granted blanket clemency to nearly 1,600 people involved in the 2021 US Capitol riot in Washington - has complained that local police and prosecutors are not tough enough.

He said that 800 DC National Guardsmen - "and much more if necessary" - would be deployed to the city of 700,000.

The president cast his actions as necessary to "rescue" Washington from what he described as a wave of lawlessness.

"I'm deploying the National Guard to help reestablish law, order and public safety in Washington, DC," Trump told a news conference at the White House. "Our capital city has been overtaken by violent gangs and bloodthirsty criminals."

It is the second time this summer that the Republican president has deployed troops to a Democratically governed city.

Trump sent thousands of National Guard troops to Los Angeles in June over the objections of state and local officials.

As Trump was speaking at the White House, several dozen demonstrators gathered outside.

"There is absolutely no need for the National Guard here," said 62-year-old retiree Elizabeth Critchley, who brandished a sign with the slogan "DC says freedom not fascism".

"It's all for show. It's just a big theater," she said.

Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth, who was among several cabinet officials flanking Trump, said "other specialised" National Guard units could also be deployed.

"They will be strong, they will be tough, and they will stand with their law enforcement partners," he said.

The new approach echoes Trump's immigration policies that have effectively sealed the southern border amid mass deportations while deploying ac-



Members of 'Refuse Fascism' and 'Free DC' argue with each other during a rally against the Trump administration's federal takeover of the District of Columbia, outside of the AFL-CIO office in Washington, DC. - AFP

tive-duty troops against protesters in Los Angeles.

The president told reporters that he planned to roll out the policy to other cities.

"If we need to, we're going to do the same thing in Chicago, which is a disaster," Trump said at the White House, adding: "Hopefully LA is watching."

Unlike the 50 states, Washington operates under a unique relationship with the federal government that limits its autonomy and grants Congress extraordinary control over local matters.

Since the mid-1970s, the Home Rule Act has allowed residents to

elect a mayor and a city council, although Congress still controls the city's budget.

Data from Washington police show significant drops in violent crime between 2023 and 2024, although that was coming off the back of a post-pandemic surge.

Trump posted on social media ahead of the news conference that he also wants to tackle homeless encampments, after signing an order last month making it easier to arrest homeless people.

He promised individuals "places to stay", but "FAR from the Capital".

Trump said criminals would be

jailed and that it would all happen "very fast".

Federal law enforcement have already increased their presence after a former Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) staffer was beaten during an attempted carjacking.

A Gallup poll in October found that 64% of Americans believed crime had risen in 2024, although Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) data shows the lowest levels of violent crime nationwide in more than half a century.

"Let me be crystal clear - crime in DC is ending, and it's ending today," said Attorney-General Pam Bondi.

Meanwhile, a federal trial was set to begin this week in San Francisco on whether Trump's administration violated US law by deploying 5,000 National Guard troops and US Marines without the approval of Democratic Governor Gavin Newsom.

The troops were sent in response to protests over raids by federal immigration agents.

State and local officials objected to Trump's decision as unnecessary, unlawful and inflammatory.

In a post on X, Newsom wrote: "Washington, DC - here's what you can expect now that the president wants to cosplay as dictator in your city, too: Soldiers sitting around with nothing to do; Lies from all levels of the federal government; No meaningful impact."

Judge denies govt request to release Maxwell transcripts

A federal judge has rejected the Trump administration's request to unseal grand jury transcripts from the criminal case against Ghislaine Maxwell, the convicted accomplice of Jeffrey Epstein.

District Judge Paul Engelmayer said there is little in the transcripts that is not already in the public record, and they do not identify anyone other than Maxwell and Epstein as having had unlawful contact with minors.

The Justice Department had sought to release the transcripts to help defuse spiralling anger among President Donald Trump's own supporters over what they have long seen as a cover-up of Epstein's crimes and high-level connections.

Engelmayer dismissed government arguments that the grand jury transcripts should be released because of "abundant public interest" in the case.

"Its entire premise - that the Maxwell grand jury materials would bring to light meaningful new information about Epstein's and Maxwell's crimes, or the government's investigation into them - is demonstrably false," he wrote.

Maxwell, 63, is serving a 20-year sentence after being convicted in 2021 of criminally aiding Epstein, who died in a New York jail in 2019 while awaiting trial.

Her lawyers had opposed releasing the transcripts, saying that it could potentially impact her ongoing legal appeals of her conviction. - AFP

VCUarts Qatar's 2025 Summer Art & Design Programs Inspire Young Minds Through Creative Exploration

This summer, VCUarts Qatar's Community and Continuing Education (CCE) Unit once again opened its doors to aspiring young creatives through its popular Summer Art & Design Programs, providing an immersive introduction to university-level art and design education, giving students a peek into the world of arts and creativity.

The Summer Art & Design Programs of VCUarts Qatar, in their current format, were initiated in 2020 and have, since then, garnered interest from students who pursue the art and design stream of education.



week extending to August 7, the High School Summer Art & Design Program returned in its updated format. This year's participation of 32 students experienced a comprehensive overview of the academic journey at VCUarts Qatar.

The program began with a foundation week, introducing essential visual arts concepts like drawing, model making, artistic expression, all modeled after the university's Art Foundation curriculum. Students engaged in creative experimentation and skill-building through guided, experiential learning.



Running throughout July and into early August, the annual programs welcomed a total of 67

participants, with 32 high school students and 35 children aged 8-14, engaging in hands-on workshops

and digital storytelling.

The High School Summer Program offered a unique opportunity for pre-university students to experience VCUarts Qatar from the inside out. Participants gained exposure to studio practices aligned with first-year university coursework, helping them discover their passions and prepare for future studies in creative fields.

These workshops not only develop artistic skills but also build self-expression, critical thinking, and teamwork, key abilities to benefit learners in and beyond the classroom.

Empowering Future Designers: High School Summer Program

Held from July 13-31, with an optional portfolio development

Over the following two weeks, participants explored VCUarts Qatar's core majors: Graphic Design, Interior Design, Painting and Printmaking, and Kinetic Imaging. The optional fourth week focused on portfolio development, equipping students with the tools to refine their artistic voice and prepare compelling applications to leading art and design institutions.

Digital Discovery for Young Artists: Children's Summer Program

For children aged 8-14, the Summer Art & Design Program featured a tech-forward approach with sessions held from July 13-24. Led by VCUarts Qatar alumna and practicing artist Sumam Azzam, this year's courses emphasized

digital creativity using Procreate and iPads.

Participants engaged in two unique workshops, Creature and Environmental Concept Art, where students designed fantastical characters and imagined worlds and Sequential Visual Storytelling, which guided students through comic-style illustration to develop original narratives.

The workshops gave young learners an exciting space to explore storytelling and visual expression while building confidence in using digital art tools.

Shaping Creative Futures

"Our summer programs continue to play a crucial role in introducing young learners to the

creative possibilities within art and design," said Rasha Alkasab, Program Manager of Community and Continuing Education at VCUarts Qatar. "Whether it's preparing for a career in design or simply nurturing a lifelong love for creative expression, we're proud to support every student's journey."

By offering structured, engaging, and skill-rich programming, VCUarts Qatar reinforces its mission of making art and design accessible to all. VCUarts Qatar continues to nurture Qatar's next generation of creative thinkers, through such content-rich experiential programs that further embraces the skilled creatives of the new generation.



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COMMENT

Philippines would be dragged into Taiwan war, says Marcos

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos yesterday warned that his country would be dragged "kicking and screaming" into any war over Taiwan, but must prepare for it. China considers Taiwan, Manila's closest neighbour to the north, to be part of its territory and has threatened to seize it by force. "If there's a war over this it is near us. What are we supposed to do?" Marcos told a news conference, adding: "We can't ignore it." "So inevitably, despite our fervent wish to avoid any confrontation with anybody, anywhere, a war over Taiwan will drag the Philippines, kicking and screaming into the conflict," he said.

TRIAL

Bangladesh court hears graft case against Hasina

A court in Bangladesh yesterday heard cases brought by the anti-corruption organisation against ex-leader Sheikh Hasina and her family. Three officials from the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) read out testimonies in three separate cases over an alleged land grab of lucrative plots in a suburb of the capital Dhaka. Hasina, 77, fled Bangladesh by helicopter on August 5, 2024. She has defied orders to return from India. Hasina has been named in six corruption cases, along with her US-based son Sajeed Wazed Joy, and her daughter Saima Wazed, who has been serving as the World Health Organisation's Southeast Asia chief in New Delhi.

INCENTIVE

Nepal waives fees to some peaks to lure mountaineers

Nepal will waive climbing fees for nearly 100 peaks in the remote northwestern Himalayas for the next two years to try and lure more mountaineers to the less developed region bordering China, an official said yesterday. The country has opened 491 of its peaks but climbers typically focus on around 25 in the northeast and central parts of Nepal, including the world's highest peak Mount Everest. Tourism department official Himal Gautam said the decision to waive permit fees to 97 peaks, ranging from 19,258-23,398 feet in Nepal's Karnali and Far Western provinces, was aimed at promoting mountaineering on smaller mountains in remote areas.

PEOPLE

Scientist's remains found on Antarctic glacier 66 years on

The remains of a British meteorologist who died in an Antarctic expedition in 1959 have been recovered six decades later from a glacier, the British Antarctic Survey said yesterday. They were identified by DNA-testing as those of Dennis "Tink" Bell, who died aged 25 when he was working for the Falkland Islands Dependencies Survey, which became the British Antarctic Survey (BAS), the UK's polar research institute. Bell died on Admiralty Bay on King George Island, located 120km off the coast of Antarctica on July 26, 1959. He was stationed on the island for a two-year assignment at a small UK research base.

N Korea warns of reprisal against S Korea-US drills

Reuters
Seoul

North Korea has denounced a major joint exercise planned by the South Korean and US militaries as "direct military provocation" and warned of counteraction, despite signs of easing tension across the border under a new leader in Seoul. North Korea's Defence Minister No Kwang Chol said its military has an "absolute mission" to defend national security against the large-scale 11-day drills by South Korea and the US, which he said posed a real and dangerous threat.

gin on August 18 to test command control and troop mobilisation under an upgraded security strategy against a heightened threat of nuclear warfare by North Korea.

However, the allies said a major part of the field exercise would be postponed and conducted separately next month, citing weather conditions.

The postponement was widely seen as prompted by South Korea's liberal President Lee Jae Myung, who won a snap election in June, to ease tension with Pyongyang.

Ties between the rival Koreas had plunged to some of the most hostile points in recent years, as the North pressed on with developing nuclear attack capabilities and dramatically boosted military ties with Russia.

While Pyongyang has publicly rebuffed renewed outreach by Lee and Washington for dialogue, it was making moves seen as reciprocating some South Korean actions to ease tensions.

South Korea said on Saturday it had detected the North's military removing some loudspeakers at the border, days after the South began dismantling similar equipment that had blared propaganda across the border.

North Korea also seemed to have used a more restrained tone in criticisms about the US-South Korea joint exercises, said an official at Seoul's unification ministry, which oversees ties between the Koreas.

Pyongyang "appears to focus on expressing its position on the drills, rather than making military threats," ministry spokesperson Koo Byoungsam said at a briefing yesterday.



A Chinese Coast Guard ship with a damaged bow following an incident with a Chinese Navy vessel, is seen from a Philippine fisheries boat near Scarborough Shoal in the disputed South China Sea.

China vessels collide while pursuing Philippine boat in South China Sea

AFP
Manila

A Chinese navy vessel collided with one from its own coast guard while chasing a Philippine patrol boat in the South China Sea yesterday, Manila said, releasing dramatic video footage of the confrontation.

The incident occurred near the contested Scarborough Shoal as the Philippine Coast Guard escorted boats distributing aid to fishermen in the area, spokesman Commodore Jay Tarriella said in a statement.

Video released by Manila showed a China Coast Guard ship and a much larger vessel bearing the number 164 on its hull colliding with a loud crash.

Additional footage and photos released later by the Philippine Coast Guard showed the stricken Chinese vessel still afloat but with its entire bow crumpled inward.

"The (China Coast Guard vessel) CCG 3104, which was chasing the (Filipino coast guard vessel) BRP Suluan at high speed, performed a risky manoeuvre from the (Philippine) vessel's starboard quarter,

leading to the impact with the PLA (People's Liberation Army) Navy warship," Tarriella said in a statement.

"This resulted in substantial damage to the CCG vessel's forecastle, rendering it unseaworthy." At a later press briefing, Tarriella said that crew members aboard the smaller Chinese vessel had been visible in its front section just before the collision.

"We're not sure whether they were able to rescue those personnel who were in front prior to the collision. But we are hoping that these personnel are in good condition," he told reporters. Tarriella said the Chinese crew "never responded" to the Philippine ship's offer of assistance.

Gan Yu, a Chinese coast guard spokesper-

son, confirmed that a confrontation had taken place without mentioning the collision.

"The China Coast Guard took necessary measures in accordance with the law, including monitoring, pressing from the outside, blocking and controlling the Philippine vessels to drive them away," he said in a statement.

China's ministry of foreign affairs did not confirm or deny the collision when asked.

Yesterday's incident is the latest in a series of confrontations between China and the Philippines in the South China Sea, which Beijing claims almost entirely despite an international ruling that the assertion has no legal basis.

More than 60% of global maritime trade passes through the disputed waterway.

Speaking at a morning news conference, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos said the country's patrol vessels would "continue to be present" in the area to defend, as well as exercise Manila's sovereign rights over, what it considers to be part of its territory.

Bangladesh dengue deaths top 100

Bangladesh is experiencing a surge in dengue cases and deaths, with health experts warning that August could bring an even more severe outbreak of the mosquito-borne disease if urgent action is not taken. Dengue has killed 101 people and infected 24,183 so far this year, official data showed, placing a severe strain on the country's already overstretched healthcare system. A sharp rise in fatalities has accompanied the spike in cases. Nineteen people have already died of dengue so far in August, following 41 deaths in July - more than double June's 19 fatalities. "The situation is critical. The virus is already widespread across the country, and without aggressive intervention, hospitals will be overwhelmed," said Kabirul Bashar, an entomologist at Jahangirnagar University.

Japan urges evacuations after heavy rains



People cycle and walk in heavy rain in the city of Kumamoto, Kumamoto prefecture, southwestern Japan, yesterday. Japanese authorities urged millions to evacuate their homes after heavy rains unleashed floods and landslides in the country's southwest, leaving several residents missing.

UK criminal deportations scheme to be expanded

AFP
London

The UK government has announced it will expand a scheme forcing some foreign nationals to have appeals against convictions heard from abroad, to prevent them delaying deportations. The number of countries enrolled in the initiative will nearly treble to 23, with people from those nations now to be deported before they can appeal their convictions, it said.

Meanwhile, Justice Secretary Shabana Mahmood said she intends to change the law so most foreign criminals will be deported immediately when they receive a

prison sentence. Foreign national offenders make up around 12% of the prison population, and the move could save money, according to Mahmood.

The steps come as Prime Minister Keir Starmer's centre-left Labour government faces intense domestic pressure over immigration, as Nigel Farage's right-wing Reform UK party surges in polls.

Farage, a longtime critic of immigration, has made the issue central to his party's messaging, alongside a focus on crime.

Starmer's government, which has slumped in popularity since taking power a year ago, has made a flurry of announcements on both policy areas in an apparent bid to counter Reform's appeal.

ANNOUNCEMENT

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India decries 'sabre rattling' after Pakistan army chief's remarks

Reuters
New Delhi

India yesterday accused its neighbour Pakistan of "sabre rattling" and "irresponsibility" after media reports on remarks about nuclear threats in South Asia made by Pakistan's army chief while

on a visit to the US. Indian media reports, citing sources, quoted Pakistan's Field Marshal Asim Munir as saying: "We are a nuclear nation. If we think we are going down, we'll take half the world down with us".

An excerpt of his speech shared by Pakistani security officials did not include the "nuclear nation" remarks. "Pakistan is a responsible

nuclear weapon state with an elaborate command and control structure under full civilian control," a statement from Pakistan's foreign office said.

"It has always exercised discipline and restraint, while dealing with the issues of such importance." Munir reportedly made the remarks at a black-tie dinner hosted

by a Pakistani-origin businessman in Florida on Saturday, where he spoke to a crowd of more than 100 people. Reuters could not independently verify the remarks.

India and Pakistan both possess nuclear weapons and fought their deadliest battle in decades in May, sparked by an attack on tourists the previous month in Kashmir,

which killed 26 civilians. Randhir Jaiswal, spokesperson for India's foreign ministry, said: "Nuclear sabre-rattling is Pakistan's stock-in-trade," adding: "The international community can draw its own conclusions on the irresponsibility inherent in such remarks." He said it was also regrettable that the reported remarks should have

been made while in a friendly third country.

In a version of the speech shared by Pakistani security officials, Munir said: "The (Indian) aggression has brought the region to the brink of a dangerously escalating war, where a bilateral conflict due to any miscalculation will be a grave mistake."

Trump's tariffs spark calls to boycott US goods in India

Reuters
New Delhi

From McDonald's and Coca-Cola to Amazon and Apple, US-based multinationals are facing calls for a boycott in India as business executives and Prime Minister Narendra Modi's supporters stoke anti-American sentiment to protest against US tariffs.

India, the world's most populous nation, is a key market for American brands that have rapidly expanded to target a growing base of affluent consumers, many of whom remain infatuated with international labels seen as symbols of moving up in life.

India, for example, is the biggest market by users for Meta's WhatsApp and Domino's has more restaurants than any other brand in the country. Beverages like Pepsi and Coca-Cola often dominate store shelves, and people still queue up when a new Apple store opens or a Starbucks cafe does out discounts.

Although there was no immediate indication of sales being hit, there's a growing chorus both on social media and offline to buy local and ditch American products after Donald Trump imposed a 50% tariff on goods from India, rattling exporters and damaging ties between New Delhi and Washington.

Manish Chowdhary, co-founder of India's Wow Skin Science, took to LinkedIn with a video message urg-

ing support for farmers and startups to make "Made in India" a "global obsession," and to learn from South Korea whose food and beauty products are famous worldwide.

"We have lined up for products from thousands of miles away. We have proudly spent on brands that we don't own, while our own makers fight for attention in their own country," he said.

Rahm Shastry, CEO of India's DriveU, which provides a car driver on call service, wrote on LinkedIn: "India should have its own home-grown Twitter/Google/YouTube/WhatsApp/FB - like China has."

To be fair, Indian retail companies give foreign brands like Starbucks stiff competition in the domestic market, but going global has been a challenge. Indian IT services firms, however, have become deeply entrenched in the global economy, with the likes of TCS and Infosys providing software solutions to clients world over.

On Sunday, Modi made a "special appeal" for becoming self-reliant, telling a gathering in Bengaluru that Indian technology companies made products for the world but "now is the time for us to give more priority to India's needs." He did not name any company. Even as anti-American protests simmer, Tesla launched its second showroom in India in New Delhi, with yesterday's opening attended by Indian commerce ministry officials and US embassy officials.

Australia's chief of army visits India



Australia's chief of army lieutenant general Simon Andrew Stuart (front left) shakes hands with his Indian counterpart Upendra Dwivedi upon his arrival, during his ceremonial reception at the defence ministry in New Delhi yesterday.

India pushes ahead with US trade talks despite tariff hike

Reuters
New Delhi/Mumbai

India hopes trade talks with the US will continue even as the US hiked tariffs on its exports to 50% due to New Delhi's purchase of sanctioned Russian oil, two lawmakers said yesterday, citing a briefing to a parliamentary panel on foreign affairs.

Last week, President Donald Trump imposed an additional 25% tariff on Indian goods due to Delhi's continued purchase of Russian oil, bringing the total duty on Indian exports to the US to 50% - among the highest of any American trading partner.

"Our relations with the US are multi-

dimensional, and should not be seen only through the prism of trade," one of the lawmakers said, citing the foreign secretary's briefing to the panel.

Shashi Tharoor, an opposition Congress party leader, who heads the panel, said trade talks would continue. "As of now, there is no change in the existing plans for the sixth round," he said, referring to a scheduled visit of a US trade delegation to New Delhi from August 25.

Earlier, junior finance minister, Pankaj Chaudhary told lawmakers that about 55% of India's merchandise exports to the US would be covered by the new tariff.

His estimate factored in the initial 25% levy, he said in a written response to a lawmaker's query.

"The department of commerce is engaged with all stakeholders" for their assessment of the situation, Chaudhary added.

Goods trade between the US and India - the world's biggest and fifth-largest economies, respectively - was worth about \$87bn in the last fiscal year, according to Indian government estimates.

The panel separately voiced concerns over Pakistani army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir's reported remarks on nuclear threats in South Asia during a visit to the US.

"Nuclear blackmail will not work with India, and no party, or representative disagrees with this view," Tharoor said, adding the external affairs ministry had condemned the comments.

Delhi-Washington Air India flights suspended

Air India will suspend services between New Delhi and Washington, DC from September due to aircraft shortages caused by upgrades to its Boeing planes and as Pakistan's airspace ban for Indian carriers affects its international routes.

The suspension will mean there are no flights between the two capital cities by an Indian airline, and comes amid rising tensions over US President Donald Trump's high tariffs on Indian imports.

Air India, acquired by the Tata Group from the government in 2022, said yesterday that 26 of its Boeing 787-8 aircraft were being retrofitted to enhance customer experience, which would reduce aircraft availability until at least the end of 2026.

"The suspension is primarily driven by the planned shortfall in Air India's fleet," it said in a statement.

Govt's health initiative for students



A health worker administers deworming tablets to students as part of a government initiative to prevent intestinal worms, at a government-aided school in Hyderabad, India, yesterday.

Delhi ordered to move stray dogs to shelters

Reuters
New Delhi

India's top court yesterday ordered authorities in the capital Delhi and its suburbs to relocate all stray dogs to shelters within eight weeks, according to the Live Law website, after media reports of a rise in cases of rabies, especially among children.

The Indian government said in April that nearly 430,000 cases of dog bites had been reported across the country in January, compared with 3.7mn cases all through 2024.

India has 52.5mn stray dogs, according to a State of Pet Homelessness survey by Mars Petcare, while 8mn homeless dogs are in shelters.

Local media reports suggest that Delhi alone has 1mn stray dogs. Reuters could not inde-

pendently verify the number.

India's top court took up the case after several reports in local media of stray dogs biting children in Delhi, with some turning fatal. Live Law yesterday reported that the court has asked authorities in Delhi to pick up stray dogs from across the city and move them to dog shelters.

"Infants and young children, should not at any cost, fall prey to rabies. The action should inspire confidence that they can move freely without fear of being bitten by stray dogs. No sentiment should be involved," the court said, according to Live Law website. Solicitor General of India Tushar Mehta, for the Delhi government, urged for strong intervention as "sterilisation only prevents the increase in their population, but it does not take away the power of the dogs to give rabies," the website reported.

Gandhi, opposition leaders held after poll panel protest

Reuters
New Delhi

Dozens of Indian opposition leaders were detained in New Delhi yesterday as they shouted slogans, jumped barricades and marched to the Election Commission in a rare public protest against what they say are electoral malpractices.

The credibility of elections has rarely been questioned in recent decades in the world's most populous democracy. Some analysts say the opposition accusations could damage Prime Minister Narendra Modi as he navigates one of the

toughest periods of his 11 years in office.

Around 300 opposition leaders, including Rahul Gandhi of the main opposition Congress party, marched from parliament to the office of the independent election panel but were stopped by police some distance away.

The protesters shouted slogans against the panel and Modi's government, saying elections were being "stolen", and tried to push past barricades before being detained and taken away in buses.

"This fight is not political. This fight is to save the constitution," Gandhi told reporters. "We want a clean, pure voters' list."

Gandhi and Congress have alleged that voters' lists in states where the party lost are corrupted, with voters' names deleted or included more than once to rig elections in favour of Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party.

Opposition parties have also criticised the election panel's decision to revise the voters' list in the key northern state of Bihar just before state elections due later this year, saying it aims to disenfranchise large numbers of poor voters.

The BJP and the Election Commission have rejected the accusations. The commission has said that changes in voters' lists are shared with political parties and all complaints are investigated thoroughly.

It has also said that voters' lists need to be revised to remove dead voters or those who have relocated to other parts of the country, among others.

Congress and its allies have fared poorly in two state elections that they had expected to win after an impressive show in last year's parliamentary vote, which saw BJP losing its outright majority and remaining in power only with the help of regional parties. The BJP said opposition parties were trying to create a "state of anarchy" by sowing seeds of doubt about the electoral process.

"They are in a state of bankruptcy because of their continuous losses," federal minister Dharmendra Pradhan told reporters yesterday.



Rahul Gandhi is stopped by police along with other lawmakers during a protest against what they say are electoral malpractices, in New Delhi, India, yesterday.

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GULF TIMES

Indigenous Ecuadorians say axing ministries hurts Amazon forest

Ecuadorian President Daniel Noboa's decision to axe the Environment Ministry and bring it under the Energy and Mines Ministry could prove disastrous for biodiversity, Amazon forest protection and Indigenous rights, activists warned.

Noboa announced in July that more than a dozen ministries would be merged, cutting the number from 20 to 14, in an attempt to rein in public spending.

The Ministry for Women and Human Rights was also folded into the Ministry of Government. Around 5,000 workers were laid off.

The objective was efficiency, said government spokesperson Carolina Jaramillo.

"The national government has set itself the goal of having an efficient state that truly provides quality public services to citizens," she said.

But environmentalists and Indigenous people say Ecuador needs independent ministries to defend human rights and to protect fragile Amazon and Andean ecosystems from both formal and illegal mining, oil drilling and other forms of damaging development that drive deforestation.

Nemonte Nenquimo, an activist and leader of the indigenous Waorani people, expressed her alarm. "How is it possible that, overnight, the Ministry of Environment disappears and suddenly, oil and mining interests are in charge?" she asked.

The Waorani people have previously won important court victories to protect their ancestral land from oil companies in parts of the Amazon rainforest.

"That is extremely dangerous. It strips away the rights of Indigenous peoples and the rights of nature," Nenquimo told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

"It's a strategic move to enable future exploitation in the name of national development or for global markets. They speak of protecting the rainforest, but in practice, they authorise oil drilling and mining," she said.

The ministerial changes come as Ecuador aims to ramp up oil drilling in the Amazon despite court rulings and an August 2023 referendum limiting drilling in the megabiodiverse Yasuni National Park.

The nature reserve is home to the Waorani and the Tagaeri and Taromenane people, two of the world's last "uncontacted" Indigenous communities living in voluntary isolation.

In the 2023 vote, more than 10mn people – almost 60% – voted to keep crude in the ground in the Yasuni '43-ITT' oil block.

Business heir Noboa, then a presidential candidate, supported the proposal not to drill in the area.

However, now president after winning a full term in May, Noboa appears to have made a U-turn, insisting Ecuador cannot afford not to exploit its natural resources. The country relies heavily on oil exports to underpin its economy.

Noboa aims to boost oil production and Ecuador expects foreign oil companies to invest around \$42bn in the sector over the next five years.

"How can the body responsible for curbing extractivism be subordinate to those who promote it? Who will safeguard the rights of nature when they get in the way of mining or oil interests?" asked Yasunidos, a local civil society group that promoted the Yasuni vote, in a statement.

Ecuador is also pushing to increase mining due to rising mineral prices, particularly for gold, which has hit record highs.

Analysts predict mining in Ecuador could be worth \$4bn in annual export revenues in 2025 and displace bananas as the country's third biggest export.

Ecuador experienced an economic slump last year caused by drought-driven electricity shortages and budget constraints that stymied investment and normal business operations.

An International Monetary Fund report last month suggested Ecuador make structural reforms to attract private investment in what it called high potential sectors such as mining, hydrocarbons and energy. – Thomson Reuters Foundation

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AI information: Navigating truth, misinformation and impact on society

The world is undergoing an unprecedented digital boom in AI-powered technologies, which have started to make their way into a variety of life domains, as well as applied and human sciences. This began with medicine, engineering, industry, and innovation, and has extended to education, languages, literature, philosophy, culture, media, and so forth.

With the concurrent rapid evolution of AI, the available information about AI's identity has increased, along with its capability to provide users with the required information. Some folks depend on integrated technological underpinnings to obtain accurate and reliable information, while others may receive less accurate information that often entails hyperbole, dramatically raising concerns or fake expectations.

Amid the interplay between reality and fabrication, it becomes essential to exercise restraint so as to accurately comprehend the reality, evaluate the impact of this technology on societies, their future, and the way people engage with it across various facets of their lives.

Numerous scientific studies indicate that AI is now capable of performing multiple tasks with high efficiency, including analysing big data at ultra-fast speeds and extracting precise results. It possesses advanced abilities to recognise images and sounds with accuracy that sometimes surpasses human performance, offering intelligent recommendations across various digital platforms.

Moreover, it is utilised to enhance medical diagnosis through deep learning models and to operate chatbots that provide round-the-clock customer service. Notwithstanding the advanced booms AI has achieved in human life through providing a multitude of services, thus observers see the link between AI's capabilities and human awareness or cognition as an exaggeration or a misunderstanding of the technology's true nature.

They point out that AI absolutely lacks any human-like feeling or consciousness, but rather relies on mathematical models and software on which it has been trained, enabling it to process information and predict within a limited domain.

Other opinions note that AI's capabilities to predict remain limited compared to humans, as the latter largely possess consciousness as part of God-given dignity.

According to multiple analyses, a broad range of perceptions have spread recently alleging that AI will displace human workers. Reciprocally, numerous studies indicate that this technology, albeit the potential concrete transformations it might make in the labour market, simultaneously creates new job opportunities that require various renewable skills.



Noteworthy, the abundance of reliable information about AI is one of the critical factors in directing public policies toward pursuing technology in a scientific and responsible manner, thereby contributing to enhancing innovations in universities and enterprises worldwide, in addition to empowering individuals to adapt and be ready for the evolving changes in the work environment.

Conversely, the prevalence of misinformation about AI-powered applications could lead to indefensible concerns among users, such as losing jobs or violating privacy. This reflects the misunderstanding of the nature of technology and its capability limits, thereby triggering digital gaps between those who wield a clear-eyed scientific comprehension of AI's role and those who pursue oppositional attitudes without objective reasons.

Highlighting the correct standards in handling AI to ensure the obtaining of accurate information, Principal Software Engineer at the Qatar Computing Research Institute (QCRI), Dr Hamdy Mubarak told Qatar News Agency (QNA) that the correct utilisation of AI primarily requires the veracity of entered information or the information which is being inquired about.

He pointed out that it is highly important to verify the outputs and never accept them as they are without verification, stressing that this information should essentially be compared with other reliable sources such as official portals and encyclopedias. AI tools rely on analysing data and learning from pre-trained datasets, yet they are not infallible, requiring careful human oversight to monitor and continually review their outputs, Dr Hamdy highlighted.

He indicated that it is essential to verify the safety standards in AI model responses before their use, to avoid passing on any biases and to ensure that the information provided is up to date. These measures, he said, require assessing the models' performance using standardised test samples to identify their strengths and weaknesses.

Dr Hamdy further called for safety standards to include preventing access to information that may harm individuals, such as promoting self-harm or violating privacy, or that may detrimentally impact communities, including incitement to violence, hate

speech, rumours, and bias or discrimination among people based on religion, nationality, race, or other factors.

He emphasised the importance of refraining from using personal or sensitive data in training or feeding AI applications.

The performance of AI, he says, differs based on language, as some models in English outperform others and expose weakness in Arabic.

Strong AI models exist in mathematics and logical reasoning, yet they may fall short in literary composition, image generation, or poetry. Therefore, it is essential to test AI models within their specific domain, verify the accuracy of their information and references, and ensure their use complies with laws while respecting individuals and communities, Dr Hamdy underlined.

He noted that numerous AI-powered applications could generate fake information displayed as reliable with the objective of garnering users to accept it without verification.

He added that these models may produce biased results, making it crucial to identify and address such biases before relying on them.

Many users fall into the trap of "algorithmic bias" by fully trusting AI outputs without review, which can shape fixed beliefs and influence their decisions, he said.

Dr Hamdy warned against supplying AI applications with private information, as these applications could further use this information for training which at the end of the day may be leaked or shared with other users.

It is very important to be vigilant when extensively relying on these kinds of applications. Human critical thinking should be preserved as a substantial component in analysing and using AI outputs.

In addition, Dr Hamdy advised users to never rely on one AI application, since each tool has its own technological characteristics, strengths, and weaknesses, which could yield discrepancies in outputs.

Relying on more than one platform and comparing the outputs among these platforms represents a critical step toward verifying the information and upscaling the reliability level, as this procedure provides users with the chance to assess the congruity or discrepancy and ultimately exclude inaccurate outputs, he noted.

Dr Hamdy added that many professional studies gauge AI performance in a variety of areas, including languages, sciences, and medicine, as well as the congruity of content with diverse cultural contexts. He elucidated that such models display an apparent outperformance in limited domains compared to others.

He warned that misinformation can erode public trust in institutions and media, deepen social divides, and foster "echo chambers" where people only encounter content reinforcing their existing beliefs, limiting open dialogue and stifling intellectual diversity.

Many studies revealed that flawed information spreads much more rapidly on social media platforms than the correct one, which could possibly cause numerous problems, such as diffusing rumours, creating fissures among people, or even influencing critical decisions, as many users of social media sometimes share information without verifying their authenticity, triggering large mushrooms of flawed information.

Amid the ongoing controversy about comparing human cognition with that of AI, Dr Hamdy emphasises that AI is literally capable of processing a huge bulk of data and generating answers based on the training, but it doesn't possess self-cognition.

Dr Hamdy confirmed that AI doesn't understand meaning as humans do and has no human feeling, but rather leans on statistical and mathematical models that predict the most likely correct answers in accordance with data.

He further added that the human mind is characterised by deep thinking and comprehending contexts, in addition to interacting with values and cultures, thereby rendering the comparison between him and AI inaccurate.

Humans are the sole beings capable of moral reflection and taking decisions that go beyond technological data, while AI remains a robust statistical tool, nothing more, Dr Hamdy highlighted.

Finally, Dr Hamdy stated that studies suggest that there is a discrepancy in information accurateness from one application and one subject to another, but generally nobody can count on those tools 100%, as these studies indicate that the veracity percentage ranges between 40% and 60% in myriad fields, implying that verification from other sources is an essential matter.

According to a host of digital experts, AI is neither a miraculous force nor a looming menace, but rather a powerful tool capable of reshaping societies for the better if approached rationally.

Accordingly, folks must distinguish fact from fiction in its outputs and engage with it through a scientific, critically evaluative lens to harness its benefits while keeping its risks at bay. (QNA)

Child dies in Italy as European heatwave sets records, sparks wildfires

AFP
Las Médulas, Spain

A young boy died of heatstroke in Italy while wildfires threatened a Unesco site in Spain and French cities saw record temperatures, as a heatwave baked Europe yesterday.

The four-year-old Romanian boy died days after being found unconscious in the family's car in Sardinia.

The boy was airlifted to a Rome hospital but died of irreversible brain damage, the hospital told AFP yesterday.

The news came as Italy's health ministry issued a red alert warning for seven major cities, including Bologna and Florence.

Some 11 Italian cities are on red alert for today, and 16 cities tomorrow, while around 190 firefighters and the army continue to tackle a wildfire on Mount Vesuvius that caused the closure of the national park to tourists.

Wildfires damaged a Unesco World Heritage-listed site in northwestern Spain and forced evacuations in three Balkan countries as high temperatures fanned by strong winds left parts of Europe in flames.

Spanish firefighters struggled to contain a wildfire that damaged a Roman-era mining site in Las Médulas and prompted hundreds of residents to evacuate.

High temperatures and winds of up to 40kph (25mph) created "many difficulties", said Juan Carlos Suarez-Quinones, the Castile and Leon regional environment minister.

"We will not allow people to return until safety in their communities is absolutely guaranteed," he told reporters, estimating that about 700 people had been displaced.

Four people, including two firefighters, suffered minor injuries, he added.

The blaze broke out on Sunday near the Las Médulas area famed for its striking red landscape.

Spain has been in the grip of a heatwave

for the past week, with temperatures nearing 40° Celsius in many areas and fuelling wildfires.

Castile and Leon alone has seen 13 fires in the past three days, according to Suarez-Quinones, who said that some were believed to have been deliberately started.

In the southern tourist town of Tarifa, more than 2,000 people were evacuated, some from hotels and beaches, after a fire that had been subdued on Friday flared up again, with more than 100 firefighters battling the flames.

In neighbouring Portugal, firefighters were battling three large wildfires in the centre and north of the country.

People were evacuated from dozens of homes in the Balkans as firefighters battled blazes in Albania, Montenegro and Croatia, where red alerts were announced.

In Albania, hundreds of firefighters and soldiers had subdued most of the nearly 40 fires that flared up in the last 24 hours, according to the defence ministry, but more

than a dozen were still active.

Since the start of July, nearly 34,000 hectares (84,000 acres) have been scorched nationwide, according to the European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS).

Police allege that many of the blazes were deliberately lit, with more than 20 people arrested in recent weeks.

Just outside the capital of neighbouring Montenegro, where temperatures soared to 40C, fire crews managed to save dozens of homes when a blaze broke out in inaccessible terrain yesterday.

In Croatia, around 150 firefighters also spent the night defending homes from a blaze near the port city of Split.

In the northwestern Turkish province of Canakkale, more than 2,000 people were evacuated and 77 people received hospital treatment for smoke inhalation after several fires broke out around the tourist village of Guzelyali, authorities said.

Several homes and cars caught ablaze,

according to images shown on Turkish media, while more than 760 firefighters, 10 planes, nine helicopters and more than 200 vehicles were deployed to battle the flames.

Turkiye had just experienced its hottest July since records began 55 years ago.

Temperature records were broken in at least four weather stations in southern France, as the government called for vigilance.

The southwestern city of Bordeaux hit a record 41.6C while all-time records were also broken at meteorological stations in Bergerac, Cognac and Saint Girons, according to the national weather service, Météo France.

The heatwave, the country's second this summer, began on Friday and was forecast to last possibly until August 19 or 20.

Yesterday 12 French departments were placed on red alert, the country's highest heat warning, with four more expected today.

Both sides in Ukraine war 'will need to cede territory'

Reuters/AFP
Washington/Kyiv/Brussels

US President Donald Trump said yesterday that Kyiv and Moscow will both have to cede land to end the war in Ukraine and talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin this week will instantly show whether the Kremlin leader is willing to make a deal.

European leaders and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky plan to speak with Trump ahead of his summit with Putin in Alaska on Friday, amid fears Washington may dictate unfavourable peace terms to Ukraine.

It will be the first between sitting US and Russian presidents since Joe Biden met Putin in Geneva in June 2021.

Trump has hardened his stance towards Moscow by agreeing to allow additional US weapons to reach Ukraine and threatening tariffs against buyers of Russian oil, but fears have persisted in Europe that he might agree to a deal that forces big concessions from Kyiv.

European Union foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said yesterday that "transatlantic unity, support to Ukraine and pressure on Russia" were needed to end the war and "prevent future Russian aggression in Europe".

Trump told a White House press conference of his talks with Putin: "This is really a feel-out meeting."

He said he would know "probably in the first two minutes" whether progress was possible.

"I'm going to be telling him, 'You've got to end this war,'" he said. "I'm going to go and see the parameters now. I may leave and say, 'Good luck! And that'll be the end. I may say, 'This, this is not going to be settled'."

Trump said that a future meeting could include Zelensky and the US goal is a speedy ceasefire in the bloody 3-1/2-year-old conflict.

He plans to talk to European leaders soon after his talks with Putin.

The US president has spent the first months of his second term in office trying to broker peace in Ukraine - after boasting that he could end the conflict in 24 hours - but multiple rounds of talks, phone calls and diplomatic visits have failed to yield a breakthrough.

Trump has in the past talked about land swaps but neither Russia nor Ukraine has been open to ceding land as part of a peace deal.

Speaking to reporters, Trump said: "There'll be some land swapping going on."

"I know that, through Russia and through conversations with everybody, to the good of Ukraine," he said. He said Russia had occupied some "very prime territory" but "we're going to try to get some of that territory back".

The US president said his aim is to bring Putin and Zelensky together, with or without being present himself.



A woman walks past an installation at Kyiv's Independence Square. - Reuters

"Ultimately I'm going to put the two of them in a room, I'll be there or I won't be there, and I think it'll get solved," Trump said.

Kallas said that the EU would work on a 19th package of sanctions against Russia and warned against concessions to Moscow.

"As far as Russia has not agreed to full and unconditional ceasefire, we should not even discuss any concessions," she said in a statement. "The sequencing of the steps is important. First an unconditional ceasefire with a strong monitoring system and ironclad security guarantees."

In a post on X, Kallas said the EU would also work to increase military support for Ukraine and assistance for its budget needs and accession to the EU.

Zelensky warned yesterday that any concessions to Russia would not persuade it to stop fighting and more pressure was needed on the Kremlin.

He said Russia is preparing troops for new offensives instead of getting ready to stop the war, and he urged countries to keep sanctions on Moscow until Ukraine receives security guarantees.

"Russia refuses to stop the killings, and therefore must not receive any rewards or benefits," he wrote on X. "Concessions do not persuade a killer."

Ukraine has sought to push back Russian invaders ever since the largest and deadliest war in Europe since World War II began in February 2022.

Putin launched the invasion to take over

Ukraine and expand Russia's sphere of influence.

Zelensky spoke to the leaders of India and Saudi Arabia yesterday in an effort to mobilise support for Kyiv beyond Europe ahead of Trump's meeting with Putin.

Putin has also made a flurry of calls in recent days, speaking to the leaders of China, India, Brazil and three ex-Soviet states to brief them on his contacts with the United States.

Germany will convene a virtual meeting of European leaders tomorrow to discuss how to pressure Russia ahead of a European call with Trump.

Zelensky and EU and North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (Nato) officials are expected to join the meeting.

Trump's administration has not disclosed its proposed territorial exchanges or any mechanism to ensure Putin complies with a ceasefire and does not try to overrun more of Ukraine.

Trump's special envoy to Ukraine, retired US Army General Keith Kellogg, earlier this year proposed a "resiliency force" of European Nato troops to secure the frontlines, as well as creating an 18-mile-wide demilitarised zone in eastern Ukraine.

No US troops would be involved.

Britain and France in July convened a "coalition of the willing" of more than 30 nations and agreed to pursue operational plans for a European air, sea and land "reassurance force" and to "regenerate" Ukraine's military.

Kellogg also said that Ukraine would not be admitted to Nato, meeting one of Putin's demands.

Spain orders town to scrap motion restricting Muslim festivities

AFP
Madrid

Spain's leftist government has ordered a town to drop a ban on religious celebrations in municipal sports facilities, a measure that critics say was aimed at blocking long-standing Muslim festivities.

The town council of Jumilla, in the southeastern region of Murcia, approved the ban last week with support from the conservative Popular Party (PP), saying that it sought to "promote and preserve the traditional values" of the area.

Far-right party Vox had demanded the measure in exchange for backing the PP mayor's municipal budget.

Spain's national government swiftly denounced the ban, with minister for inclusion and migration Elma Sainz calling it a "racist motion".

Territorial Policy Minister Angel Victor Torres announced on X yesterday that the cen-

tral government had formally ordered the Jumilla council to scrap the ban, arguing it violates the constitution.

Jumilla, a town of about 27,000 people, has a significant Muslim community, many of whom work in the agricultural sector.

For years, the community has used sports venues for celebrations such as Eid al-Fitr.

The controversy comes just weeks after far-right groups and immigrant residents clashed for several nights in another Murcia town following an assault on a retired man by a young North African.

Even Spain's Catholic Church criticised the ban in Jumilla, saying that public religious expressions are protected under the right to religious freedom.

Vox leader Santiago Abascal said he was "perplexed" by the church's stance, suggesting that it might be tied to public funding or to clergy abuse scandals that he claimed have "gagged" the institution.

Jellyfish swarm forces French nuclear plant to shut down

A nuclear plant in northern France was temporarily shut down yesterday after a swarm of jellyfish clogged pumps used to cool the reactors, energy group EDF said.

The automatic shutdowns of four units "had no impact on the safety of the facilities, the safety of personnel, or the environment", EDF said on its website.

"These shutdowns are the result of the massive and unpredictable presence of jellyfish in the filter drums of the pumping stations," the Gravelines plant operator said.

The site was fully shut after the incident, with its two other units already offline for maintenance.

Teams were carrying out inspections to restart the production units "in complete safety", EDF said, adding the units were expected to restart on Thursday.

"There is no risk of a power shortage," the company added, saying other energy sources, including solar power, were operational.

Gravelines is Western Europe's largest nuclear power plant with six reactors, each with the capacity to produce 900 megawatts.

The site is due to open two next-generation reactors, each with a capacity of 1,600 megawatts, by 2040.

This is not the first time jellyfish have shut down a nuclear facility, though EDF said such incidents were "quite rare", adding the last impact on its operations was in the 1990s.

There have been cases of plants in other countries shutting down due to jellyfish invasions, notably a three-day closure in Sweden in 2013 and a 1999 incident in Japan that caused a major drop in output. - AFP

Adidas sorry over cultural appropriation

Adidas has formally apologised after Mexico President Claudia Sheinbaum criticised the sportswear brand over a shoe that replicated traditional Indigenous huarache sandals without attributing the design or crediting artisans.

The misstep comes shortly after Prada triggered a widespread backlash in India when its Milan fashion show debuted a sandal replicating Kolhapuri slippers, highlighting the increased scrutiny multinational brands face over the origin of their designs.

"The 'Oaxaca slip-on' was inspired by a design from Oaxaca, rooted in the tradition of Villa Hidalgo Yalálag," Adidas said in a statement. "We offer a public apology and reaffirm our commitment to collaborate with Yalálag in a respectful dialogue that honours their cultural legacy."

Mexico President Claudia Sheinbaum said on Friday that her administration is looking into legal ways of supporting Indigenous communities whose designs are taken by big companies, after Oaxaca officials criticised the Adidas shoe. - Reuters

Colombia presidential hopeful dies months after rally shooting

AFP
Bogota

Colombian presidential candidate Miguel Uribe has died two months after being shot at a campaign rally, his family said yesterday, as the attack rekindled fears of a return to the nation's violent past.

The 39-year-old conservative senator, a grandson of former president Julio Cesar Turbay (1978-1982), was shot in the head and leg on June 7 at a rally in the capital Bogota by a suspected 15-year-old hitman.

Despite signs of progress in recent weeks, his doctors on Saturday announced that he had suffered a new brain haemorrhage.

"Rest in peace, love of my life," his wife Maria Claudia Tarazona wrote yesterday morning in a post on Instagram. "Thank you for a life full of love."

Authorities have arrested six suspects linked to the attack, including the alleged

shooter, who was captured at the scene by Uribe's bodyguards.

Following a nationwide manhunt, police announced the arrest of an alleged mastermind behind the attack, Elder Jose Arteaga Hernandez, alias "El Costeno".

Police have also pointed to a dissident wing of the defunct Farc guerrilla group as being behind the assassination.

The attack on Uribe, a leading candidate ahead of the 2026 presidential election, has reopened old wounds in a country wracked by violence.

His own mother, journalist Diana Turbay, was killed in a botched 1991 police operation to free her from cocaine kingpin Pablo Escobar's Medellin cartel.

Four presidential candidates were assassinated during the worst phase of violence in the 1980s and 1990s under Escobar, who terrorised citizens of Bogota, Medellin and elsewhere with a campaign of bombings.

Writing on X, left-wing President Gustavo Petro, of whom Uribe was a fierce critic,



A photo of Senator Miguel Uribe Turbay is placed on his desk in the Colombian Senate chamber after he died yesterday. - Reuters

said the government's role was to "repudiate crime... regardless of ideology" and assured the safety of Colombians was his top priority.

"Today is a sad day for the country," Colombian Vice-President Francia Marquez said on social media. "Violence cannot continue to mark our destiny. Democracy is not built with bullets or blood, it is built with respect, with dialogue."

Uribe had fiercely criticised Petro's strat-

Harry and Meghan sign reduced deal with Netflix

Prince Harry and Meghan Markle will continue to develop film and TV projects for Netflix but on more limited terms, the streaming giant announced yesterday.

The estranged British royal and his wife have worked with Netflix since 2020, producing documentary *Harry & Meghan* and lifestyle series *With Love, Meghan*.

"We're proud to extend our partnership with Netflix and expand our work together," said Meghan. - AFP

Seven die in mudslide while fixing water channel

A mudslide in northern Pakistan yesterday swept over a group of villagers attempting to fix a water channel damaged in recent monsoon rains, killing seven people, officials said. Volunteers had been working through the night in the northern city of Danyor, in mountainous Gilgit-Baltistan, to fix a man-made water channel when part of the group was buried under a mudslide, the region's disaster agency said.

Seven bodies were recovered, the agency added in an incident report. - AFP

QMC, Katara sign pact to boost media partnership

Katara Cultural Village and the Qatar Media Corporation (QMC) signed a co-operation agreement yesterday at a press conference held at Katara, with the participation of senior officials from both institutions.

The agreement aims to enhance effective media coverage of Katara's events and activities, and to foster joint efforts in producing cultural content that reflects Qatari identity and supports the strategic goals of both entities.

The agreement was signed by Katara deputy general manager and human resources director Saif Saad al-Dosari and the di-

rector of the QMC's Office of International Co-operation and Agreements, Abdullah Ghanem al-Mohannadi.

Al-Dosari said that the agreement builds on the QMC's longstanding and distinguished efforts in highlighting Qatar's cultural scene.

Over the years, he said, the QMC has played a central role as a professional and committed national media partner, contributing to presenting an authentic image of Katara's diverse events and initiatives.

Al-Dosari noted that the agreement opens new horizons for col-



laboration between the two institutions, reflecting their shared commitment to developing a media experience closely tied to culture, and enhancing media presence for Katara's events locally and globally.

He described the partnership with the QMC as one that enriches cultural and media content and strengthens both entities' ability to effectively convey Qatar's cultural message to a wider audience.

Al-Mohannadi said that the partnership with Katara is a natural extension of the synergy between two national institutions

operating under a shared vision to enhance Qatar's media and cultural landscape.

He described the agreement as a strategic and intellectual alliance that brings together the QMC's deep-rooted media expertise and Katara's vital cultural role.

The partnership, he added, reflects a mutual commitment to supporting culture through media and creativity, and to elevating the media scene in Qatar.

Al-Mohannadi expressed his aspiration to achieve the shared objectives of the agreement in serving Qatari society and realising a common vision that fosters col-

laboration in media, culture, and the arts.

He underscored the importance of highlighting national identity and strengthening Qatar's presence regionally and internationally, in alignment with the country's aspirations for a prosperous future rooted in creativity and knowledge.

Al-Mohannadi also stressed upon the need to build strong media foundations between national institutions in support of Qatar National Vision 2030.

Meanwhile, Qatar TV director Ali bin Saleh al-Sada told the Qatar News Agency (QNA) that

the strengthening partnership between the QMC and Katara comes after years of close co-operation in the development of media in Qatar.

This agreement, he said, is the culmination of that journey, aligning with Qatar National Vision 2030 and reinforcing the country's global status through the QMC's media coverage and Katara's cultural and heritage events.

Katara public relations and communication director Salem Mabkhoot al-Marri told the QNA that the agreement reflects a long-standing partnership between two leading institutions in the fields of media and culture. - QNA



Qatar Photography Centre opens entries for first Doha Photography Award

The Qatar Photography Centre, affiliated with the Ministry of Culture, has announced the opening for submissions to the first edition of the Doha Photography Award, a cultural and artistic initiative aimed at supporting visual creativity and promoting Qatar's photographic identity.

Submissions will be accepted from August 10 - October 2.

The award offers a professional platform for photographers from inside and outside Qatar, regardless of age or experience, across six categories:

- The Qatar category, which highlights the country's landmarks
- The General - Colours category
- The General - Black and White category
- The Special Theme - Emotions category
- A Storytelling category for a series of photographs narrating a complete visual story
- A Special Theme category for emerging Qatari photographers under the age of 18.

The total value of the prizes exceeds QR2mn, with a grand prize of up to QR300,000 awarded for first place in the Qatar category.

Other categories will offer prizes of QR150,000 for first place, QR100,000 for second, and QR75,000 for third.

The award requires that all images be taken with professional cameras and not generated using artificial intelligence (AI) technologies.

It also prohibits the use of logos or watermarks, and requires that submissions adhere to technical standards that ensure the quality of the submitted work.

Qatar Photography Centre director Jassim Ahmed al-Buainain expressed pride in the launch of the first edition of the Doha Photography Award.

The award is expected to attract wide participation from around the world, thanks to the diversity of its themes and the value of its prizes, in addition to the opportunity it provides photographers to showcase their work on a platform that enjoys both local and international attention. - QNA

Kahramaa launches Tarsheed Summer Camp 2025

The Qatar General Electricity & Water Corporation (Kahramaa) has launched a summer camp aimed at raising environmental awareness and conservation culture among youths.

The Tarsheed Summer Camp 2025, held under the slogan *Learn... Think... Conserve* is running from August 11-13 at the Qatar Scientific Club (QSC), with the participation of 60 students aged 9-14.

The event aims to instil values of sustainability and environmental responsibility in participants, by introducing them to the principles of conservation and the importance of efficient use of electricity, water, and renewable energy.

It also seeks to enhance creative think-



ing and teamwork skills among children and youth through a combination of educational and hands-on activities in an engaging environment.

The daily programme includes carefully designed activities such as technical and educational workshops on electricity and energy concepts, interactive group activities to develop life skills, and awareness lectures tailored for the target age group.

It features guided scientific tours inside the facilities of the QSC, allowing participants to practically apply the concepts they learn.

Among the workshops are the Electric Circuit Workshop, the Solar Energy Workshop, and Water Desalination Workshop, offering fun and simplified scientific experiences that enhance participants' understanding of energy and water topics.

Camp activities are held daily from 9.30am-12pm, concluding each day with a science segment that reinforces the knowledge gained.

This initiative reflects Kahramaa's ongoing commitment to strengthening community engagement and promoting culture of conservation, in line with Qatar National Vision 2030 to achieve sustainable development and raise a generation that is environmentally conscious and capable of contributing to the production of natural resources for future generations. - QNA



Inspection drive targets clay extraction sites

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC)'s Department of Wildlife Development has carried out an inspection campaign targeting natural resource and clay extraction sites in various parts of the country, in co-operation and co-ordination with the Environmental Security Unit of the Internal Security Force (Lekhwiya).

The campaign is part of ongoing efforts to protect the environment and conserve natural resources, aiming to detect environmental violations, address breaches, and ensure that the concerned facilities comply with approved environmental standards and requirements.

The inspection activities focused on assessing the extent to which these entities apply the proper environmental practices and on limiting the negative impacts that may result from certain industrial activities, which could pose a direct threat to wildlife, biodiversity, and the ecological balance in the country.



Vehicle intrusion upon wild meadows spotted

The Ministry of Environment and Climate Change (MoECC)'s Wildlife Protection Department's patrols in the Central Region have spotted an environmental violation involving the unauthorised entry of a vehicle into one of the Rawdat in Al Jumailiya area.

One of the offenders drove over the grass, causing damage to the wild plants and disrupting the ecological balance at the site.

The ministry confirmed that the necessary legal measures have been taken against the violator in accordance with the applicable laws and regulations.

The ministry stressed that such behaviour does not reflect a sense of environmental responsibility and contradicts national efforts to protect vegetation cover and prevent soil degradation.

The ministry urged all to comply with approved environmental requirements and regulations, and avoid harmful practices that damage plants and grass, in particular during the rainy season, when vegetation cover grows naturally.

It also stressed the importance of sticking to designated roads when travelling in desert areas, and avoiding random entry that threatens the environment and negatively impacts the sustainability of wildlife.

The ministry also renewed its call for the public to participate in efforts to protect the environment and preserve the beauty of Qatar's nature by adhering to laws and reporting any harmful practices.